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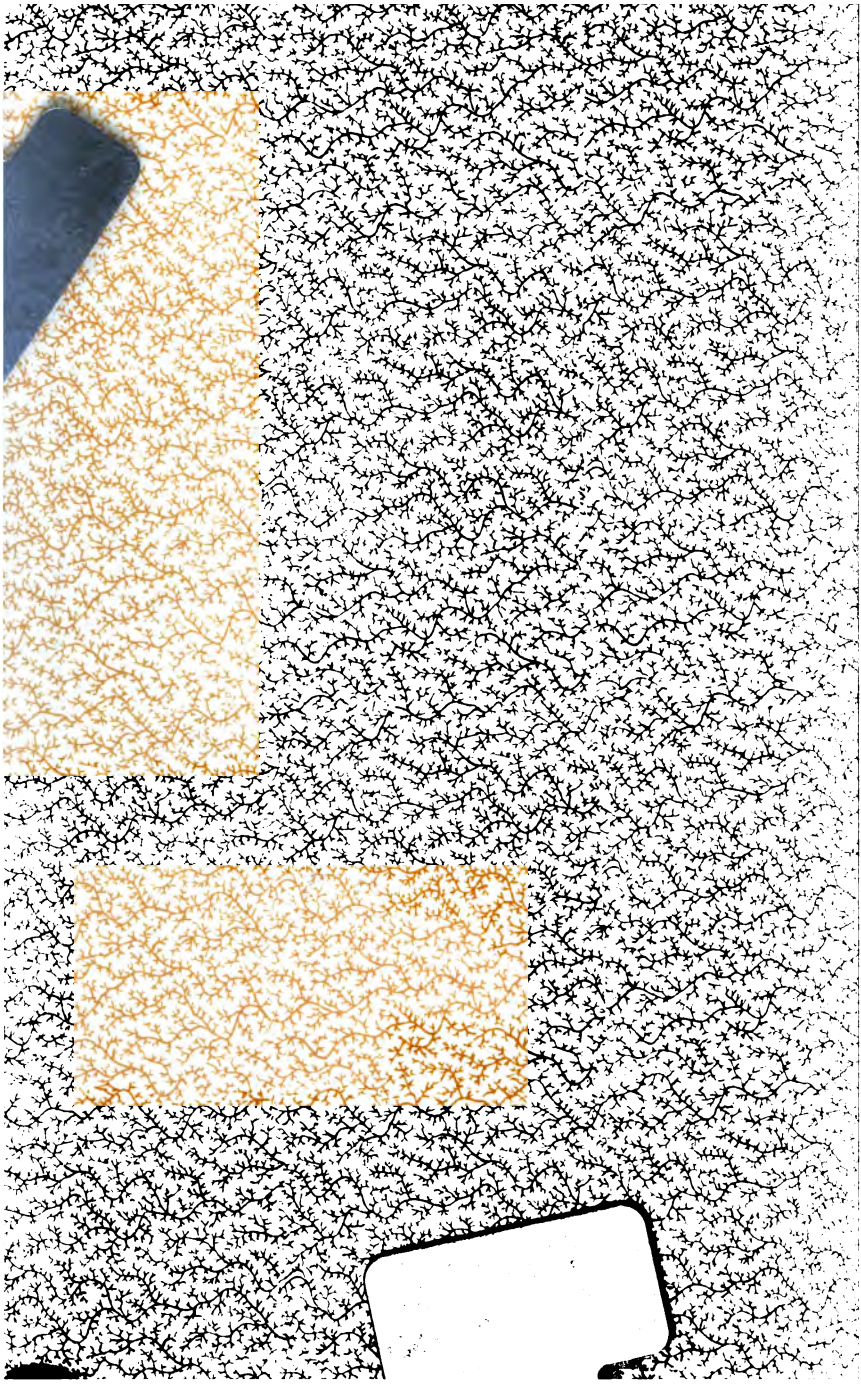

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RAMONA.

THE MILLS OF THE GODS

BY

GEORGE P. DILLENBACK

WITH PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRODUCTIONS
OF SCENES FROM THE
MOVING PICTURE PLAY AS PRODUCED
BY THE VITAGRAPH COMPANY OF AMERICA

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To

MY WIFE

In remembrance
of the many pleasant days
spent in the localities where
the scenes of this story
are laid

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The Mills of the Gods

CHAPTER I.

She was very small and very pretty, with dark, curling hair, red lips and brown eyes that snapped with resentment as she stood with clenched hands, her body tense and quivering. Above her and across the road, heavy with white dust from which the heat rose in shimmering waves, two boys and a girl, all larger and older than she, stood and called at her, making faces and snapping their teeth with their thumbnails: *"Piccola megera! Brutta vipera! Cattiva Rosa! Rivoluzionaria!"**

Now and then one or another would throw a handful of dust or a stone at her, or rather, in her direction, for she stood with so brave an air and faced them so steadily undaunted they were afraid. Gradually their calls became less frequent, less shrill and insistent.

Rosa turned and walked on up the hill, her bare brown feet raising puffs of dust as she went. There was a painful swelling in her throat and she was half blinded by the bitter tears she would not allow to fall. She followed the blistering road up the hill nearly to the top, where she stopped to rest on a stone, in the shadow of a huge oak that protected her from a fierce Italian sun. Perhaps she did not understand the full beauty of the view stretched before her, but it never failed to soothe her and drive away the anger aroused by her taunting schoolmates, and so, elbow on knee and chin in hand, she brushed the damp curls

*Little vixen, ugly cat, bad Rosa, revolutionist.

from her forehead and looked down upon the tranquil valley.

The sky-colored lake, quiet and sleeping; the clustering trees casting their dark shadows aslant the long green hills; the distant snow peaks dim in the amber mist; the domed cathedral towering above the sloping red-tiled roofs; the white hotels and buildings bordering the curve of the lake; the Plaza, with pleasure boats swinging idly before it, the bronzed rowers sleeping under the gaily-colored awnings—the sensuous beauty of it all appealed to her, child though she was.

There was no sign of life, save where a small boy was carrying heavy sticks of wood from a boat tied to the quay, and piling them in regular rows upon the shore, while his father and grandfather quietly smoked in the scant shade.

The surface of the lake ruffled and changed from azure to dark blue with a greenish tint here and there as the fresh breeze woke it from its slumber. A boatman stretched himself, then straightened the cushions upon which he had been resting and glanced about for a possible fare. A motor boat shot out from the little basin of the Chateau with the balustrade and graceful gardens.

Rosa turned and looked down the road. A covered cart with high wheels, drawn by a patient horse, crept toward her, enveloped in a cloud of dust; the driver, sleeping beneath the sheepskin hood, allowed the horse to pick his own way. Rosa stepped to the other side of the road out of the dust and watched them pass, the drowsy horse, the sleepy driver.

And such is Como any afternoon in early Summer.

CHAPTER II.

"*Padre,* what is a 'rivoluzionaria?' asked Rosa, a few minutes later.

Miguel Rappold stooped and kissed her, then sitting upon the step of the cottage, he drew her down beside him; she nestled comfortably in the crook of his arm.

"Rosa," he said thoughtfully, "I had meant to tell you, what I am now about to say, some day, but I did not think it would be to-day." He took her tiny hand in his strong one and gently pressed it.

"Many years ago, *carissima,* before you were born, I lived in Milano; things were different then. I was the second son of Count Costollo, and had a good social position. The estate was not large, and would go to my elder brother, Stefano. I was prepared for the Church, and 'twere better, perhaps, that I had gone to the Monastero dei Cappuccini, but, *carissima,* I was young and loved life, gay life. I loved the lights, the chatter, the gayety of Milano. So I went away from home and my father never forgave me. I learned to work in gold, and after a time became what they called skillful, and I loved the work. I was successful, but thought little of money; it went as it came, easily; one night the opera, another a theatre, dinners, suppers, drives on the Corso."

Miguel hesitated. The child beside him felt something of his emotion, and nestled a little closer to comfort him. He patted her shoulder and continued.

"Then a girl came to Milano from Como with her mother. They were very poor and the girl was obliged to seek employment. After many weary efforts and refusals she of necessity took the only place

open to her, that of waitress at the Alcazar, a restaurant, not of the best patronage. It was there I met her. We, Pietro and I, had been to La Scala and stopped at the Alcazar for an omelette. It was but a few blocks from the Piazza del Duomo and two from my rooms, the heart of Milano, you might say. She was beautiful, ah! how beautiful, *mia cara,* with soft curling brown hair brightened with threads of burnished copper, and shadowy eyes under long curving lashes, eyes that were one moment brown and the next almost black. No one should be allowed such eyes, Rosa; they suffer too much."

He paused, slipped a thin gold chain from his neck, pressed the spring of a locket suspended from it and held it out to the child.

"Look, Rosa, look, such was your mother!"

The child took the locket and looked with wistful eyes at the miniature of a beautiful woman that smiled up at her.

Miguel gently freed himself from the little girl and walked down the gravel path, winding through the garden, past the clustered roses, the flowering shrubs, and stood beneath an almond tree in its full glory of pink blossoms. He rested his arms on the little gate and looked without seeing into the deep forest beyond.

The years rushed back upon him. He and Pietro were seated at a long table covered with a red and white cloth and the air was heavy with cigarette smoke and the odor of stale tobacco. Girls hurried from patron to bar, from bar to patron, their faces drawn with the heavy work and long hours, their eyes feverish, their cheeks flushed. At a few of the tables there were women, with rouged lips and darkened eyes, without peace, without happiness. Occasionally one would rise and seek a place at another table, to be received with a coarse jest, or perhaps ignored entirely.

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THE MAN TURNED AWAY, RAISING A HAND TO HIS FACE, STILL RED FROM THE BLOW.

—Page 9.

The musicians in the corner began to play *"La Bella Napoli."* There was a low humming accompaniment of voices in the choruses. For a moment, the tired girls were quiet; each one seemed to have some special admirer, by whom she took her place, with a whispered word or a pitifully roguish glance.

Pietro was talking of the opera they had just heard; Pietro was always talking. Miguel smiled. "The dear fellow," he thought. Ah! how well he remembered that night.

Pietro finished his chatter about music and singers and turned to the girl removing the empty glasses from the table.

"Signorina," he begin, "would you be so kind as to ask that excellent orchestra to play *Pagliacci,* the song, not the entire opera, you understand, signorina? And, signorina, if you will be so kind as to ask the Signor Salsicce if he and his mechanics will join me in a glass of *chianti* or in a *mezzo-litro* of the foaming beer of Munich."

The girl nodded and turned away, gratefully pocketing the small coin which he tendered her.

Pietro turned to Miguel and was about to speak, when he was silenced by the sound of a blow; a chair was overturned and a plate crashed to the floor.

Miguel and Pietro jumped to their feet as did nearly all the other guests. The proprietor rushed from his office; the barmaids and waitresses paused in their work, one drawing a glass of beer long since overflowing, others with trays in their hands piled high with empty glasses. All eyes were focused on a young girl who, with crimson cheeks and flashing eyes, stood facing a man of evil and dissipated appearance, her brave young eyes looking hate and loathing into his.

The man turned away, raising one hand to his face, still red from the blow. With his other hand he

reached for his hat. "Sir," he said to the proprietor, with what dignity he could muster, "I leave your establishment in disgust." Jamming his hat on the back of his head and fluttering his little yellow stick in as jaunty a manner as he could assume, he strutted from the room, passed into the street and crossed to a cafe on the opposite corner, where he took a seat at a table sheltered behind some privet, growing in painted boxes, and ordered brandy. From where he sat he could see the entrance (which was also the exit for both patrons and help), of the Alcazar.

And in the Alcazar there was great confusion; those who had seen the blow struck were excitedly explaining to those who had not, just how it had happened. "So, signor, so, he placed his hand on her, so, signor, and then he said something with a nasty leer; he is a brute; and then she struck him, such a blow, signor, his face still smarts, I am sure."

"And serves him right, the brigand," explained a girl to Miguel and Pietro who had not resumed their seats but stood watching the girl, the tears glistening in her eyes as the indignant proprietor remonstrated and scolded in rapid Italian.

The hum about them was incessant, and opinion was equally divided.

"Serves him right, *il brutto porco.*"

"But she should have been more——what shall I say, signor,—diplomatic?"

"He is a rascal; never was any good."

"But he is powerful in the City Government."

"I am glad it did not happen to me. Poor girl, he is so vindictive!"

"He never forgets."

"Ah! but did you see his face? you could count the fingers of her hand upon it."

"He tries to make love to all the new girls."

"Yes, it was her first evening here."

"And so pretty!"

"Ah, passable, but a poor figure. She is from the country." The last from a showy girl with exaggerated lines, who complacently smoothed her dress over her large hips.

"Come, Pietro," said Miguel, "he has dismissed her; we will wait at the foot of the stairs. Perhaps we can help her."

They stood at the entrance until she came down. Taking off his hat, Miguel stood before her as she paused on the steps.

"Pardon, signorina, but we have just come from the room above, where we saw the unfortunate occurrence. We beg you to accept our escort to your home."

She looked at them doubtfully for a moment, then smiling through her tears, she said, prettily, "I thank you, signori. I am a little afraid, but I know I can trust you both." She gave her hand to Miguel for a moment, then to Pietro. "I am so frightened," she whispered; "so afraid."

As they stepped out to the brightly lighted street, Lorenzo arose, unobserved, from his table opposite, and followed, keeping well in the shadow and some distance behind them.

"Si, signor, we arrived but last week from Como, the poor little *madre* and I." Then, after a pause, "I do not think I like the city, signori, it is so big and noisy and dirty and—so wicked." There was a little break in her voice, and her eyes glistened again in the light from a street lamp.

Miguel was quiet, glancing occasionally at the oval of her face, at the little curls clustering about her temples, at the girlish figure walking with so much grace and freedom.

She met his glance once and her color deepened. Had she made a mistake, was this but another? No;

she would not believe it; she must trust someone, and this strong, boyish-looking man with the kind blue eyes and tender mouth, and his friend with the rugged shoulders and strong hands, surely they meant no harm!

"Signori, it is a long way to my little—lodgings." It was hard to call the garret, in a crowded street, home.

"We will call a cab, signorina."

"No, please," and her voice was so pretty in its pleading, "It is not so far as that, but to the Via Sambuco, and I prefer to walk, the night is so hot; I have longed to walk these streets at night, they looked so deserted and mysterious."

"But you must never go out alone after dark, signorina," Miguel said. "It is unsafe."

It was an evil portion of the city, infested by questionable characters and worse. Miguel shuddered when he thought of some of the crimes committed here that had come to his notice through the press, and of the many others that never would be known save in some rogue's black heart.

"May I ask why you selected this section of the city for your home?" asked Pietro.

"We do not know the city well, signore, and the very poor cannot choose."

"Did that rascally proprietor pay you for your work?"

"No, he did not, signore, and the little mother will be so disappointed; she is not well. I am afraid for my mother; she is ill, and oh! so weak and thin. She misses the country and the sunshine and the fresh air."

Miguel was very unhappy. He did not know quite how to face the situation. This poor girl, with an invalid mother to support, was in a strange city, without friends, without money, very probably without

food. He could not offer her money; he knew intuitively she would refuse it. Ah! he had it.

"Will the signorina return to the Alcazar?" he inquired.

"Oh, no; that is impossible."

"Have you any other position in view? Would you accept a very small one I could offer?"

"Oh, signore, it is too good. Anything, anything; the little mother will be so glad."

Miguel told a good lie well. It seemed the young woman whom they had employed at the store had gone away to be married. Yes, that was it, to be married. "And you see, signorina, we are at a loss to fill her place, but I am sure you are just the one. Ah, this is your—where you live, signorina? My card, and call at nine in the morning, please. Good night."

Miguel shook himself together and came out of his dream. The day was drawing to a close; a cool breeze scattered the almond blossoms in pink showers about him. He must tell Rosa—but not all, not this. He would begin here, and tell her of the happy weeks that followed for a little time, and of the marriage. And the rest! God knew the rest was sad enough.

CHAPTER III.

Rosa lay in her little bed, thinking of the wonderful story she had just heard, the story of her parents' great love for each other, how they had worked and starved, hounded by the hatred of Lorenzo; how her father had been driven from one position to another, from city to city and from town to town, where they had tried to hide in the poorest quarters.

Miguel could do wonderful things with gold and silver, and could obtain employment wherever there were goldsmiths, but after a little that unseen hand would reach forth and drive them out and on to another refuge, and her mother, always persecuted, insulted. Even the little children in the streets ran at her approach and looked with fearful eyes at the beautiful girl as she passed down to the market, where the tradespeople cheated and insulted her so that she would not come again. She went out less often, her heart crushed by the injustice of it all, her spirit broken on the wheel of one man's hatred. The warm color faded from her cheeks, they grew pale and drawn, and her eyes lost their wonderful lustre and ceased to change from brown to black, mastered as she was by one emotion, abiding sorrow.

For days she sat behind half-closed blinds, looking out at the sunlit streets where men and women lounged in the doorways, calling a happy greeting to a passing friend, or dozing in the warm sunshine. The few little plants and flowers growing in window boxes and pots suggested the open country, her country about Como. She thought she would like to go back, but what was the use? It would be the same

in Como or in Milano, or anywhere; always the same bitterness, the same misery.

Miguel watched these changes, his heart wrung with pity, until, unable to stand it any longer, he would rush out into the night. He haunted the dark shadows near the famous restaurants and theatres; he watched the hotels, and spent hours in the parks and streets scanning every face, his fingers twitching, his jaws working, murder in his heart. But always in vain. He heard of Lorenzo now and then, but it was the general opinion that the latter had gone abroad; his house was closed, and his servants were dismissed. But Miguel knew better; he felt sure that the refined cruelty of these persecutions was the work of Lorenzo himself; no agent could do the miserable work so well.

Well, they made another effort; going to Genoa, they hid amongst the shipping and the wharves. Miguel ceased to work in gold, he became a carpenter; he allowed his beard to grow, and affected a different walk, and for a time they seemed successful.

One day he was told that his services were no longer required, and when he reached home he found workmen preparing to dismantle the little house in which they lived. His wife was in confinement; it would be dangerous to move her. He pleaded, he swore, he raved; it was useless. The house had been sold; the new owner had ordered it down, and down it must come. He had no lease, no claim; they were sorry, of course; but what then?

Distracted, he rushed about and found a lodging. As Maria was being carried from the house, pale and suffering, deep black shadows beneath her closed eyes, someone laughed. Miguel, who was leading the way for the precious burden borne by the ever faithful Pietro and another, turned and looked into the leering face he had sought so long. With one spring he had him by the throat. Together they fell to the pave-

ment; the thumb and fingers of Miguel's left hand sank deeply into the flabby neck, while with his free hand he beat him time and again in the face, until torn away by two *poliziotti* and some of the workmen. They took Miguel to jail and sent Lorenzo to the hospital. Maria had mercifully fainted. That night her child was born and the tired heart stopped.

When Miguel came out of prison the revolution was at its height. Lorenzo had organized a company of cavalry, and was even then marching to join the Government forces at Pisa.

He found Rosa at the Ospedale Nazionale, where a kind-hearted nurse, having heard something of her parents' story, cared for her. He rushed to Milano, where Lorenzo was with the Government. And so Miguel joined the revolution.

"And so, little Rosa," he had concluded, "they even point a finger and call you *'rivoluzionaria.'*" That was all.

A ray of moonlight stole into the room and formed a little pool of light on the carpet. Rosa brushed the tears from her eyes. She clasped her doll more closely in her arms, and said proudly, "I, too, am a revolutionist."

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AND THE TIRED HEART STOPPED.—*Page* 16.

CHAPTER IV.

The Signora Barodi was related to Miguel Rappold, in what way, Rosa could never quite determine. His cousin had married the signora's mother, and Signora Barodi had married a cousin of Rosa's mother, so the relationship, whatever it was, was a double one, and Rosa called her "her twice cousin." She meant no disrespect by this term, but it happened that the good woman would have made two very respectable cousins weighing as she did, close to three hundred pounds.

The signora had two very strong characteristics—one was her love of housekeeping, and the other her passion for chickens. The former was fortunate for Miguel, as he was entirely dependent upon her in matters pertaining to the little household; and the latter was fortunate, too, for she kept a number of hens, which furnished the table with fresh eggs and an occasional broiler. However, the hens were not an entirely unmixed blessing, for whenever it was decided to kill one, the signora all but had hysterics trying to decide which one of her pets it should be, and after selecting nearly all of them for the slaughter, one at a time, she rejected them one after the other, for various reasons; this one had such pretty speckles, that one carried herself so well, another was too young to die, and so on through the entire thirty odd birds. This uncertainty usually wasted the best part of a forenoon and was quite futile, for the wise hens were by no means appreciative of the honor conferred on them and it ended in the signora's catching, not as she wished, but where she could.

She had just been through the ordeal and was leaving the enclosure, triumphant, a fat hen under her

arm. Rosa had watched the performance with some amusement and considerable pity, too, for she loved everything from hens to human beings. Her dog, the veriest little rapscallion of a terrier puppy, had tired of the sport; for a long time he had run up and down outside the enclosure, barking joyfully, as a bird escaped the outstretched hand of the signora, leaving a tail-feather or two in her fat fingers. As the signora grew shorter of breath she grew more crafty and moved with more deliberation. This did not suit the puppy who wanted something to chew; he turned his attention to a length of clothesline tied to a post. He got a firm grip on this, gave two or three vicious pulls and began to run in an erer-narrowing circle. He was on his fifth or sixth lap and going with considerable speed when the signora stepped within range. Her eyes were a little dim with tears at the thought of cutting off the chicken's head, and, if it must be told, with perspiration from her exertions, and she did not see the dog until too late. There was an impact, a grunt, a dull thud; the signora sat down, the hen fled, the puppy lost his grip on the rope, rolled over once or twice, then sat up and looked at the signora, one ear cocked, the other drooping, a quizzical expression on his face that undoubtedly denoted surprise, but whether at the suddenness of his own fall or at the unusual display of white stockings which, the signora always modestly concealed, is hard to say. Then, catching sight of the cackling bird he gave a shrill bark of delight and started in pursuit. Rosa screamed at him, but the temptation was too great to be overcome.

The signora scrambled to her feet somehow, and ran after the dog, begging and threatening in the same breath. The bird was remarkably fast and quick on the turns, the puppy clumsy, with a tendency to overrun his quarry whenever the hen ducked sharply in some other direction. The signora was flat-footed and

had a way of running on her heels that was not adapted to great speed, but she was never far behind, due principally to her ability to take short cuts through the bushes and over the flower beds. Finally she stopped, tired and dizzy, and looked around for help. Rosa lay, with her face buried in her arms, flat on the grass, her body shaking with laughter. A realization of the scene struck the signora and she laughed a little, too, but not very heartily; then she caught sight of Miguel and Pietro leaning limp and exhausted against the fence. She shot them a withering glance and with the remark, "If you want chicken for dinner, catch it," she walked into the house.

Suddenly the hen wheeled and faced the puppy who, taken by surprise, almost broke his neck trying to avoid the threatening beak. He stopped so suddenly that the dust rose in a little cloud around him; the bird with neck stretched and bill open walked toward the enclosure, looking sharply to right and left and emitting a defiant cluck at each step. The dog kept at a safe distance and barked a challenge—to another race; he would not fight.

The three spectators gradually regained their composure. Rosa caught the puppy and slapped him once or twice, and told him he was a naughty dog. It did not seem to worry him much for he only turned his head and rolled his eyes for another glimpse of that gray-feathered ball, licking his chops the while. His whole expression said as plainly as words, "Oh, if I but dared."

Pietro turned to Miguel. "I think the hen won," he said, with a twinkle.

"Yes, the puppy ran further, but the hen showed more head."

"And should be allowed to keep hers," Pietro added.

CHAPTER V

Dinner at the cottage that evening was a quiet meal. The signora carried herself with extreme dignity and was resentful of any exchange of glances between the others. Like all good-natured fat people she was extremely sensitive, and was greatly mortified that she had made a spectacle of herself before Pietro and Miguel. The more she thought of it the more her face burned and the harder it became to appear natural.

Miguel made two or three sporadic efforts to start the conversational ball rolling, but with little success; the occurrence of the afternoon was too fresh in their minds, and each attempt invariably led to some suggestion of the subject.

"What is the news at Como, Pietro?" Miguel inquired.

"There is nothing very new. The tourists are flocking in, as usual, at this season." The signora stole a glance at him. Would one speak of a flock of chickens? She was not sure.

"The hotels are crowded, I suppose."

"Yes, they are doing well. It promises to be a good season. Quite a number arrived at the Plinius yesterday, Cook's tourists mostly. There was one party of twenty-two women, all from America, a queer-looking lot of old hens."

The signora's eyes sought her plate. Was this a deliberate taunt? They all looked a little embarrassed, and ate in silence for a few minutes. Then Pietro, thinking it safe ground, started on politics. He talked interestingly and well. Everyone began to feel

more at ease when he concluded by saying that the radicals had better not begin to crow.

This was too much. The signora arose abruptly and left the room, her face crimson, her three hundred pounds shaking in righteous indignation.

Pietro was desolated. He apologized to Miguel. He apologized to Rosa, who looked very sorrowful. He would have followed the signora and apologized to her, but that they prevented him, thinking it better to let the matter rest.

The men moved to the piazza and lighted their pipes. Rosa went to the kitchen, where the signora was sitting stifly on the edge of a straight-backed chair. She was really hurt. Rosa stood beside her a moment in silent sympathy, then she kissed her on the cheek. "Isn't it a beautiful evening, twice cousin," she said cheerfully. "It seems a shame to light the lamps, but I must do my work." With a pretty little air of importance she struck a light and went to the dining-room and returned with a pile of dishes which she deposited in a big tin pan; then she went to the hearth for the kettle. It was pretty heavy. The signora rose, and, taking it from her, poured the boiling water over the plates.

"The dinner was so good," Rosa ventured, as she dried a cup. "No one can make *stufato* like you, signora. Father and Signor Pietro seemed very hungry. I hope they do not have the colic."

"Good spaghetti and *stufato* never made anyone sick," said the signora, now somewhat mollified.

Rosa began to sing in a sweet, clear voice, not very big, but full of melody. She rattled the dishes a little more than necessary and could hardly keep from skipping about the little kitchen. She longed to be out romping in the June dusk, playing queer games with the puppy, but she felt that the signora needed her; there would be other Summer even-

ings when one could run and play in the long shadows, but to-night her duty was with her friend, who was unhappy. So when the signora pushed her chair close to the light and took out her knitting, Rosa pulled her little chair up, too, and began to work on a doily she was embroidering in brilliant worsteds.

For a time Rosa rocked and worked industriously, stealing a glance now and then through the open door to the little kitchen garden beyond, which looked very attractive with its arbors of trailing grapevines and the even rows of vegetables, beans climbing on tall poles, and cucumbers and tomatoes growing close to the brown soil. Rosa sighed faintly and stole a glance at the signora, who was pretty in a fat way, her round cheeks highly colored, her eyes soft and kind; her hair, really beautiful, grew back from her forehead in long, rippling waves. She looked very young and childish, her mouth drooping a little at the corners.

The dog usually slept during the cleaning-up process, showing very little interest in empty dishes. He awoke suddenly and looked around. Jumping up, he ran to Rosa and, standing before her, he looked up into her face, his stump of a tail wagging an invitation to come and play. This attracting no attention, he placed his forepaws on Rosa's knee, stretched and tossed his head coaxingly. Rosa patted him and gently pushed him away. Surprised, he walked slowly to the door and looking out, sniffed the air; it was dry and warm. He whined a little, then, receiving no encouragement, he threw himself dejectedly on his cushion and went to sleep again, his hopes completely dashed for that evening.

Rosa knew how he felt. She felt pretty much the same way herself. There without was the soft night calling, and here within was duty demanding.

"Signora," she said at last, "did you know my little mother?"

"Yes, *carissima,* she lived with me for several months after she and Miguel were married. They rented the second *piano* in my little house in Milano. They were very cosy there."

"Did you love her?"

"Yes, indeed; one could not help loving her; she was so pretty, so kind and so gracious."

Rosa was quiet for a little, then she carefully folded her bright doily and drew her chair close beside that of the signora. "I wish you would tell me about her," she begged.

"Your father told you the story."

"Yes, but I want to feel that she had been happy before the trouble came. I should like to hear that she had been happy those days she lived with you."

"She was, my dear, entirely, during those first months. In the morning they would breakfast together, she sweet and fresh, he strong and manly. Before Miguel would start for work, she would hold him close for a little and it always seemed as though she was asking the good God to bless him at that moment. When he reached the corner he would turn and, raising his hat, blow her a kiss. During the day she went about tidying up the apartment, making things neat and comfortable for him, concocting dainty dishes for him, sometimes singing, at other times quiet, but always with a smile upon her lips. About four o'clock she would grow very restless, watching the clock and looking out of the windows. You see he would come home at five and that hour of waiting was the only long one of her day. She was always there at the window, with a ribbon or a flower in her hair. As he rounded the corner, she would open the blind and lean out. He would cry, 'Hello, Maria,' and she would reply, 'Hello, Miguel,' and rush to meet him."

"It is very pretty, signora. I am so glad," said Rosa.

"It was indeed pretty, *mia cara,* but I used to be afraid, they were so happy. It is not given to us to be so always; we must suffer, too. Then would follow the little dinners and the long delightful evenings, just they two, in their nest, planning for the future and wishing for you, dearie, that their home might be complete. Sometimes they would go out and walk arm in arm through the beautiful streets, or drive to the Corso in the afternoons. They went frequently to the opera or other amusement places where there was good music. Your mother was passionately fond of music, Rosa, and I think you have her talent. Then, too, there were friends, calling or inviting them to this or that gayety. But I always thought they enjoyed the quiet evenings at home the most." The signora put her arms around the little motherless girl, realizing the great longing in her heart for affection and love.

"Come, *carissima,*" she whispered, "we must go to bed; it is late."

CHAPTER VI.

The long Summer days slipped by pleasantly. Pietro often walked up the hill from Como to the cottage. This friendship of his for the little family was no trivial thing. Miguel was his lifelong friend. The signora he reverenced as a famous cook, and a good woman, while he loved Rosa better than anything else in the world. Childless and alone, his whole nature warmed towards the child of his friend. Rarely did he stop at the cottage empty-handed; there was always some token for his little lady in one of his capacious pockets, a stick of chocolate, a book, a string of beads, sometimes a few flowers. One always to be remembered day he gave her a beautiful doll that opened and closed its eyes at Rosa's will, dressed in a pretty blue gown with lace ruffles, and tiny slippers that unbuckled and came off. And then, too, another day, not so very long ago, he brought the puppy with the faded-looking eyes and the wobbly legs. You could not hold him in the palm of your hand now as Pietro had then. He was growing rapidly, his flat nose pushed into his head, his under jaw protruding, showing a few irregular white teeth and a tip of red tongue. Rosa said he "was growing beautifully ugly," and he was.

Save for Pietro there were few visitors. Once in a while a tourist climbed the hill and, attracted by the pretty garden, would push open the gate and walk in to ask for a glass of milk or a blossom from some shrub, but now a glance at the puppy usually discouraged them and they were left a good deal alone; forgetting the world, they seemed to be forgotten.

Miguel wished it so from his heart; for several years he had been free from the persecutions of Lorenzo and he hoped and prayed that Rosa might be left alone. He had solemnly registered a vow that if any harm came to the child, directly or indirectly, through Lorenzo, he would kill him with his hands. Twice he had failed; once at Genoa, and again at Pisa, during the revolution. There they met in battle, face to face, shots were exchanged, and then sword to sword they fought. Miguel ran him through and left him for dead, but he seemed to have as many lives as a cat. Next time there would be no mistake.

Rosa ran from the cottage, closely followed by the puppy, then, seeing Miguel, went to him.

"It is finished at last, *padre,*" she said joyously.

"What is, *carissima*?"

"If I show it to you, will you promise not to tell Pietro?"

"I promise."

Rosa brought forth the gaily-decorated doily, crocheted at considerable pains and with many generous thoughts.

"Do you like it, *padre*?"

"It is beautiful."

"Do you think Pietro will like it?"

"He will be delighted," Miguel said earnestly. "He will consider it one of his dearest possessions."

"Do not make fun," she said. "I know it is rather bright, but I had to use what worsted I had."

"I am not making fun, Rosa. Perhaps it has little real value as a work of art, but Pietro would not exchange it, once it comes into his possession, for the greatest of Michael Angelo's paintings. I am serious, child. Some day you will understand. Perhaps you do understand, but do not realize. Why did you make it?"

"Because Pietro has been so kind *padre*. Just think

of all the things he has given me; never a day comes, *padre*, that he has not something. I make it for him and because I love him."

"Ah, there you have it, *carissima*. You make it in love, and even if it were ugly, which it is not, Pietro would value it for that alone, and the love of a little child is more precious to Pietro than all the treasures of Rome."

Rosa was thoughtful for awhile. Then she said, "Some day I shall make him something truly beautiful, of which he may well be proud."

Miguel kissed her. "Keep that in your heart always, *mia cara*, and never do anything of which we may not all be proud."

Rosa was very happy in the thought that Pietro would be pleased. She began to realize the beauty of friendship, and the joy of giving rather than receiving. For years Pietro had made his weekly, almost daily, offerings, more often than not some trivial gift of no real value, except the wish to give pleasure to one dearly loved, and now she was about to make him a present, something made by her own hand, involving hours of patient work, and best of all, he would realize with what intent it had been conceived.

As these new thoughts were busy in her mind Pietro entered at the gate.

"Hello, Rosa! Hello, Miguel! *buon giorno!* Is it not beautiful after the rain? The birds were singing a regular choral as I came through the woods. And how is my little rosebud?" he added, as he swung her up in his strong hands and kissed her. "I wonder what is in the pocket of the big coat to-day, signorina. I give you three guesses."

"No, no, Pietro, first you must choose. Which hand?" she asked, flushed with excitement, holding her hands behind her.

"Well, well," said he in all seriousness, "something

for me! Well, let me see." He scratched his chin. "I choose this one." He leaned forward and touched her shoulder. Rosa held out the brilliant doily.

"For me, child?" He took it almost reverently. "And you worked it, every stitch?" he said, "and for me?"

"Yes, I worked it, Pietro, but it is not stitched; it is crocheted."

"To be sure, it is crocheted, Rosa. You crocheted it. I thank you, little girl." He sat down on a bench and spread it on his knee.

"*Padre* said you would like it; do you, Pietro?"

"It is the sweetest gift I ever received, Rosa." He put his arm about her and kissed her silken hair, his eyes a little dim and moist. "And now for the pocket of the big coat, little sweetheart, let us see what it carries to-day." Rosa thrust her hand into his coat and pulled it out empty.

"Ah, Pietro," she said, laughing, "to-day you bring me good intentions."

Pietro laughed, too, and wondered where she had picked up the phrase. "Well, it must be in the other," he said. Rosa dipped into the other and pulled forth a little square package done up in brown paper. "I wonder what it can be?" she said.

"Suppose you open it and see."

There was something about the little box that was mysterious and important. She untied the string and removed the wrapper, and found a white cardboard box. She opened this, and there in a nest of blue cotton she found a little gold bracelet. She looked at it in amazement for a moment, her eyes big and her lips parted. "Oh, Pietro, it is beautiful!"

He took it from the box and clasped it on her wrist.

"Presto, there we are!" he said, as it snapped shut.

She threw herself into his arms and kissed him.

Hand in hand they walked on to meet Miguel.

"Look, *padre,* is it not beautiful?" and she held out her wrist.

"It is, Rosa, quite beautiful. Almost as beautiful as the little gift you worked for Pietro. The gold bracelet and the gaudy worsted doily are both the gifts of love and carry the same message."

That evening they were to dine in the open air, on the soft turf under the trees. Rosa spread the little table and placed the knives and forks and dishes in a matronly little way, and Pietro and Miguel smoked and gossiped, watching her from time to time, the puppy always at her heels, stopping when she stopped, and trotting patiently behind when she moved.

At last the table was arranged to her satisfaction. The dog picked up a stone and, crouching on his forepaws, his hind legs straight, looked up at her, his little wrinkled head cocked. Rosa rushed at him and he darted off amongst the bushes.

Pietro sat contentedly puffing his pipe, watching the frolic, his long legs stretched to their full length, one foot over the other, his hands in his pockets.

The child and the dog were both tired and breathless. Rosa came and sat beside Pietro on the steps; the dog threw himself on the grass before them.

"He's great fun."

"Ugly enough," said Pietro.

"He looks so, but he isn't really. He is very intelligent."

"Has he any tricks?"

"Oh, yes. Here, Puppy!" The dog jumped up.

"Haven't you named him?"

"Not yet; I wanted you to, Pietro. What shall we call him?"

"Let's see; his nose seems to be his most striking feature, he has so little. Cyrano also was conspicuous because of his nose, he had so much. Suppose we call him Cyrano!"

"All right. Here, Cyrano, sit up; now lie down!" The dog complied promptly. She held a small piece of sugar before him. "Speak for it!" The puppy barked. She gave it to him. "Now say thank you?" He sneezed.

"Bravo!" said Pietro, clapping his hands, "very well done!"

CHAPTER VII.

The Board of Trustees of the National Fire Insurance Association of Milano was in executive session, and Signor Salvador Lorenzo sat in the president's chair in the absence of that executive. The general routine business of the meeting was finished; certain expenditures had been authorized, and a list of policies about to lapse was before the acting president. It was ordered by the committee that each holder should be notified and renewals solicited. A movement to adjourn was proposed and carried. Lorenzo rose and watched the other members pass from the chamber. He delayed a few moments, reading off a list of names, addresses and dates mechanically. His eyes faltered and sought a certain name a second time; yes, there it was in black and white:

*Miguel Rappold, Como, Box 57, five frame buildings, via Pinamonte, Milano, 60,000 lira, July 19th.

This last was the date of expiration and it was now the 15th. He struck a bell sharply; the stenographer of the committee came to him.

"Take this list and have the notices written as directed by the committee; have them on my desk at nine to-morrow morning. There must be no mistake about these renewals. I will check off each name."

"Si, signore."

The clerk handed Lorenzo his hat, gloves and stick.

"Buon giorno, signore."

"Buon giorno," Lorenzo replied affably. It was a part of his method always to be civil to those with whom he came in daily contact, the clerks of the various enterprises with which he was connected, and his

servants. It cost him nothing and gave him a character.

On reaching the street he ordered his coachman to drive home. When the door of the perfectly appointed brougham closed behind him he pulled down one of the shades and sank as far back in the padded corner as possible. His expression changed from one of benignant condescension to one of hate and malice; his eyes seemed to recede into their sockets, becoming small and intense; the lips parted in a vicious snarl and the veins stood out on his forehead and hands like knotted cords. This paroxysm continued for several minutes, then gave place to a look of extreme cunning; the eyes became crafty and the mouth spread in an oily grin.

"The signora is entertaining the Contessa Graca, and Signora and the Signorine Colfieri in the small salon," announced the butler, as Lorenzo entered the magnificent hall hung with tapestries and elaborately furnished in exquisite taste. "Will the signore join them?"

"Yes, immediately."

He handed the butler his shining hat, pulled down his cuffs, flicked an imaginary speck of dust from his braided black cutaway, and sauntered toward the little drawing-room. At first glance he appeared to be a middle-aged man of wealth and refinement and considerable good nature. His figure was good and he had the knack of wearing clothes well; there was a certain something that usually repelled, but very few could determine just what that something was. He was affable, courteous, gallant, but always one experienced an indefinable feeling of restraint at his coming. This was only partially realized by his acquaintances and was but momentary as a rule. It was noticeable that children disliked him, and dogs hated him.

Even as he entered the little salon, his wife started.

He was usually kind to her in an impersonal way. On but two or three occasions had she glimpsed the rotten wood beneath the smooth veneer, but they had been enough the frighten her.

He kissed the signora and exchanged a pleasant word with her guests. The Contessa was a very beautiful woman, with languishing eyes shaded by extremely long lashes that usually veiled an invitation or a challenge. The advent of a man always renewed her bewitching vivacity. As Lorenzo entered her eyes brightened perceptibly and her hand tightened on a golden reticule that had been lying in her lap. Lorenzo glanced at her again. Ah! he would call on the Contessa some afternoon, he thought.

Signora Colfieri was a true type of the society woman of Milano; a little heavy, a little gaudy, a little stout and very dark. Her daughters would be as their mother in time, but with the addition of very heavy red lips, which they inherited from their father. The elder one played very well, and the younger painted very pretty flowers on china, it was said, but Lorenzo had never investigated the truth of these rumors.

The Signora Colfieri and her daughters rose to go.

"Ladies, do not allow me to drive you away. I stopped but a moment. I am on my way to the library."

His wife joined him in asking them to stay.

No, they were going on. They had several calls to make and had stayed much longer than they had intended, beguiled by the dear signora and the dear Contessa.

They were gone. The Contessa smiled and settled back amongst the cushions, crossing one daintily-shod foot over the other beneath her laces. Lorenzo glanced at her and decided the library could wait.

"May I smoke?" she asked, taking a dainty Rus-

sian cigarette from a gold case. "Thanks Signor, a match, if you please."

He struck a match and held it to her cigarette; she, steadying his hand with the tips of her fingers, raised her eyes to his a moment, then hid them with her long lashes. Lorenzo said nothing, but breathed a little deeper. He accepted the challenge.

The signora had not noticed; she was removing a delicate Sevres cup from a tabouret to the tea-tray.

"I thought you would be out of town at this season, Contessa," he said.

"I am going somewhere, soon," she said.

"Where are you going?" asked the signora.

"I have not decided. Where would you go, signore?"

"If I were deciding for you, Contessa, I should say one of the lakes—Como, Lugano, or across the Alps to some one of the Swiss resorts, where there is gayety and life. For myself, I should choose some little mountain town where I could find quiet and rest." Lorenzo hated the country, and rest was impossible to his nature, but it was the policy of the man to disguise his real feelings.

"Ah, that would be charming, would it not, signora?"

"It would be very pleasant," she answered, a little wistfully.

"Oh, how lovely it would be to have the birds wake one in the fresh mornings, and spend one's day walking over the hills and fields gathering wild flowers!" The Contessa shivered a little at the thought.

Placing her cigarette in a bronze tray she rose. "I must be going. I have bored you long enough, signora. Come and see me, dear, won't you? I shall not leave for a week or ten days, and shall be at home every afternoon."

"I will try."

"Do not say that; you must. Come and cheer me up, I am so dull."

"Good-bye!" She gave Lorenzo her hand and returned his faint pressure. "Thanks for the suggestion of the mountains."

"I will see you to your carriage."

"Ah, thank you. Good-bye, dear, come soon."

As Lorenzo handed her into her tiny brougham he asked, "Are you at home every afternoon, Contessa?"

"Yes."

"Does that invitation apply to me as well as to my wife?"

"Perhaps."

"To-morrow?"

"Perhaps."

"At five, then."

She did not reply, but shot him a glance which seemed to say, "If you dare!"

"Home," she said.

He repeated the order to the coachman, and she was gone.

Lorenzo went directly to his study. The signora was disappointed, and hovered about the salon for a little, thinking he might return for a word. She moved with an indolent grace that was charming. She was very pretty, with delicate features and golden hair; her eyes were a little tired, and her movements listless and weary. She wanted love and kindness, and received only tolerance.

The mountains, quiet and rest, she thought; that would indeed be pleasant. She would ask Salvador at dinner if she might not go away for a few weeks.

Lorenzo walked impatiently up and down in his study, the Contessa was forgotten for the moment. His mind was fully occupied with Miguel Rappold. For several years he had thought little of him. When his wife died in Genoa he had left Miguel broken in

spirit and heart. When he chanced upon his name that afternoon the old hatred consumed him again. He was prosperous, at least he was comfortable. How had this been accomplished? It was impossible for him to have saved a fortune in eight or nine years. He was black-listed in the gold working trade; no one would give him employment. Lorenzo had seen to that. A legacy? That was it; perhaps he was rich and comfortable. Perhaps these frame houses on the Via Pinamonte were but a fraction of his wealth. The thought sickened him—and the child? Yes, there had been a child. She would be nine years old now. At the age when she was becoming more and more of a joy to Miguel; a joy to Miguel, he repeated the thought over and over, and he had sworn that Miguel should know no peace, no joy. He had neglected him too long. Ah! but he would make up for that, with interest; he would ruin him.

A servant knocked at the door: "The signora wishes to know if the signore will not come down to dinner. She is waiting in the dining salon."

Lorenzo forced himself to calmness. "My compliments to the signora," he said. "Tell her I am dining out; a matter of business. I am sorry I neglected to mention it to her."

"Si, signore," and the maid moved away.

He walked to a secret closet hidden in the wainscoting and opened it. He took out an old mud-stained suit. Dark, rusty spots were spattered over the front of the coat, bloodstains—his blood. It was the coat he had worn that day in Genoa when Miguel had so nearly killed him. He raised his hand to his forehead; there was the long scar which he would carry to his death. He took forth the picture and placed it upon a table where the light from the lamp streamed full upon it, lighting the soft eyes and tinting the dark hair with the copper threads. It was like, very like,

Maria. The day Miguel led her to the altar she looked so. She always looked so when he had spied upon them unobserved and they fancied themselves alone. Perhaps the child looked like this. He dropped his head to his arms, folded upon the table, "Oh, Maria, Maria," he sobbed, "I loved you."

He remained so for a long time his body quivering with emotion. At last he sprang to his feet, his eyes two living coals. Seizing a sharp knife he stabbed and slashed at the picture until it was reduced to a few shreds. When every vestige of its former beauty had been destroyed, he hurled it from him. Then he put on the old bloodstained garments and rushed out into the night.

CHAPTER VIII.

The wing of the palace in which Lorenzo's study was situated opened directly on the Via Rugabella, so that Lorenzo was at will to go or come as he would without the slightest fear of discovery.

When Lorenzo reached the street he kept in the shadows as much as possible, hastening across the lighted corners, his body bent, and his rough garments hanging from him in loose folds, gave him the appearance of an old and decrepit beggar. He shuffled rapidly down the Corso de Porta Romana, then turned to the left and followed the Via Alfonso Lamarmora for a considerable distance; the decent part of the city he had long since left behind him, and was now hastening along a rough walk between rows of evil-looking hovels. Suddenly he darted into a doorway facing the old Roman walls, and listened; there was no sound. Silently he groped his way to a narrow alley at the further end of which he could see a dim light. It was very dark and he stumbled once or twice, cursing under his breath. As he reached the lighted house a dog rose from the shadow and snarled. He kicked at him viciously, and the cur slunk away whimpering. He pushed open the door and stood for a moment to wink the gloom from his eyes.

He entered a long, low room. The rough floor was covered with sawdust, with here and there a box of sand; tables and chairs were ranged close to the wall on the left, and some of these were occupied by men and women. To-night there were more women than men in the place. A long bar ran nearly the length of the right wall. The room was dimly lighted by two oil lamps, that smoked badly, suspended from

the ceiling. A few people lounged against the bar. A large, heavily-built woman stood ready to serve drinks. She greeted Lorenzo with enthusiasm.

"Ah, the little hunchback!" she cried, "He has come back to his she-wolf again." She rushed toward him and would have embraced him, but he held her off with a heavy stick which he carried.

"Do not touch me, she-wolf," he cried, "or I will crack your skull."

"To be sure," she leered, her coarse red face breaking into heavy wrinkles. "The hunchback is modest, there are too many people." Her under lip was split and poorly healed. As her mouth spread in a grin, the wound broke afresh and a drop of blood trickled down her chin; she was a horrid sight, her long yellow teeth showing between the leathery lips, her beady eyes twinkling with malice, the whites bloodshot and watery.

Several men scattered about the room exchanged a coarse jest with the hunchback, and those newcomers who had not seen him before looked at him with interest. Rumor connected him with many hideous crimes and villainies; he was an object of morbid interest even to these derelicts whose lives were passed in crime.

As Lorenzo stood before the bar he looked about the evil-smelling room and noted the absent ones. Where were Silicani, Tati and Giordano? They were needed. He had not been in this den for eighteen months, and a week makes many changes in such companies.

"Serve them all, She-wolf," he ordered.

The hag rubbed her hands ecstatically. Such an order was rarely given at the "Airone Argentato," where the copper soldi were carefully counted and the silver lire anxiously guarded. This show of opulence might have been unsafe for another, but it was well-

known that the hunchback had not a centesimo upon his person; his orders were always charged and paid through the mail the following day.

The men and women stepped to the bar, and taking their mugs and glasses, returned to their seats, with a mumbled word, perhaps of thanks.

"Come, Hunchback, sit with us and tell us of your travels," cried one, a youngish looking man with burning eyes and a fierce black mustache. He was seated at a rough board table with a bedraggled woman who might have been pretty once, in a coarse way.

Lorenzo shuffled across the sanded floor and took a seat opposite them.

"Where have you been all these months?" the man asked pleasantly enough.

"To hell," Lorenzo replied sullenly.

"Then you are the first to return," laughed the other. "You are not changed, Hunchback, you were never civil."

"Ask me no questions."

"And you will tell lies enough of your own accord." As Lorenzo started to rise, he added, "Be sociable, don't get ugly." Lorenzo sank back into his chair; he rather liked the fellow.

"Where are the others, Silicani, Tati and Giordano?" he asked abruptly.

The thief laughed again. He seemed to have an unfailing fund of humor. "You should know more of Giordano than I, having just come from the Inferno. He swung at Pisa two weeks ago come Thursday. Tati is in prison, five years more for him, poor fool. Silicani slipped away to America, they say, when Crich was found with his throat slit and his pockets empty at Certosa de Pavia.

"What is your particular specialty?" Lorenzo asked with a sneer.

"Avoiding the *guardie,*" he answered readily enough.

"Don't be a fool; I need a man," whispered the Hunchback. Send the woman away."

The girl swallowed her drink and walked off dejectedly.

"What's the game?"

"Is your tongue loose?"

" 'Tis cleaving to the roof of my mouth."

"What'll you have?"

He called an order to the She-wolf.

"Come and get it, ye whelp," she replied.

"Well, what is the job?" he asked as he settled himself again.

Lorenzo leaned forward and whispered.

"Pooh, Ar——"

"Sh!"

"What's there in it?"

"Five hundred lire."

"I'm your man."

"Good!"

"Where?"

"Be here the nineteenth at eleven."

"Very well."

"Are you sure you can do it?"

"I could burn Milano for a thousand lire."

"What's your name?" asked Lorenzo.

"Call me Tano, Hunchback; that will serve."

Lorenzo rose and walked off to the further end of the bar. His eyes were feverish. This taste of the old life fired his blood. He loved the danger, the excitement, the sense of power over these poor wretches.

He was a master in the art of making up; the wig of white hair beneath his slouch hat and a few well-drawn lines had changed his face completely; he looked twenty years older; his body, crouched, seemed shrunken with age in the loose garments; the hunch

on his back was firmly strapped to his shoulders beneath his coat. He must speak to some of these people, the old ones. He paused at two or three of the tables, exchanged a word here and there, and moved restlessly about the place. The old craving had him in its grip again, but he must not give way; he knew it was madness. For more than a year he had fought and thought that he had conquered. He hastened to the street door; his hand touched the knob, but his fingers refused to turn it. His feet were heavy. He summoned all of his will; he would go—it was useless. He turned and walked back into the room, his face haggard and drawn. He held out a trembling hand. "The key, She-wolf,"—— he stammered.

The woman grinned behind her hand. Several had watched this struggle with keen interest, craning their necks. They all knew that hereafter the Hunchback would buy many rounds of drinks; they knew he would return night after night until the end. Lorenzo hurried to the little door at the end of the room and passed within.

The girl returned to Tano. She realized that some tragedy had taken place before her eyes, but she did not understand.

"What is it?" she whispered.

Tano lighted a fresh cigarette. "You will know soon enough," he said. "We all will," he added thoughtfully. "Come, let's go."

* * * * * *

Promptly at nine Lorenzo entered his office in the insurance building. Piles of letters confronted him, sealed, addressed and stamped.

He was in good spirits. It had been arranged at breakfast that his wife was to go away for a month or six weeks to some quiet place in the mountains. That would leave him free to follow his inclinations.

He thought of the Contessa, and smiled. Slowly he began to look over the mail. There was nothing of importance. He made a few notes upon some letters and placed them in a basket beside his desk. He turned to the notices and slowly looked them over. At last he came to the one he sought. He slipped this into his pocket, lighted a cigar and leaned back in his chair.

At five, he thought, I will call on the Contessa.

CHAPTER IX.

"It is so good of you, signore, to come." The Contessa Giulia half reclined on a long divan, her head and shoulders resting among a pile of pillows.

"It is so good of you, Contessa, to receive me." Lorenzo sat beside her holding a lighted cigarette between his long fingers.

She raised her eyes to his for a moment. "It is so hot and I am so lazy," she said.

"You are charming, Contessa." Her hair was a little disordered and her eyes were languid, even seductive. She moved ever so little; a tiny foot and a slim ankle showed for a moment.

"How is the dear signora?" she asked.

"Lorenzo started. He had not been thinking of his wife.

"Ah, the signora? She is very well, thank you, Contessa. She leaves to-morrow for Altdorf to spend a few weeks in the mountains."

"Are you going with her?"

"Not I—I shall be detained by business," he amended.

There was a pause. The Contessa looked at him quizzically. "You will be lonesome," she laughed.

"I hope not." He leaned forward and looked at her intently.

"Is business so good? Poor Gildo says it is awful; he says he has not made enough the past year to keep him in cigarettes."

Gildo was her husband.

"It is good enough. Where have you decided to go, Contessa?" he asked. Gildo did not interest him.

"I cannot make up my mind. I am tired of our re-

sorts; always the same people, the same amusements. It is tedious."

"Then you will be in the city some time?"

"I think so."

"I am glad."

"And why?"

"Perhaps you will take pity on me and spare me a little of your time."

"With pleasure."

Again there was silence. Lorenzo had expressed nothing of what was in his mind. Did she know?

She glanced at him and laughed, a low, tantalizing laugh.

"Would it be possible for you to dine with me in the Corso some evening?" he asked at last.

"Alone?"

"I should prefer it."

She frowned a little. "Would it be proper?" she asked, raising her eyes, big with innocence, real or affected.

"Perhaps not," he answered bluntly.

"You are candid."

"You must be your own judge of the proprieties." He was a little provoked.

"I am," she said.

Lorenzo rose and stood looking down upon her. She reached for a little silver bell which she rang; the lace fell away from her arm, leaving it bare to the elbow. Lorenzo walked to the table and picked up a book of poems exquisitely bound in vellum and gold. A maid entered.

"Did Madame ring?"

"The tea things," she said.

When the maid had gone she dropped her feet to the floor and stood up.

He turned and faced her. He started to speak; then, thinking better of it, he tossed the little volume

to the table impatiently, walked to the window and looked out.

"You are not very entertaining, signore." She stretched a little.

"I am sorry." His tone was a little cutting.

"Have I offended you?" Her voice was very soft.

"You are charming," he said. "I am a brute."

The maid placed the tea service on a small table, lighted the lamp and went out. The Contessa took her seat beside it, lifted the cover from the silver urn and busied herself with the many little things a woman finds to do.

"Will you have sugar?"

"One lump, please."

"Cream or lemon?"

"Lemon, Contessa."

"Most men take cream."

"It must be that I am not like other men." He took the dainty cup from her.

"I believe you are not," she said, and looked at him steadily.

"You compliment me, Contessa. Most men fancy they are different, but appear quite commonplace to their friends."

"You are different," she said with conviction. "Perhaps it is as well most men are of the same pattern."

"And why?"

"I don't know; the thought just struck me."

"And women, are they the same?" he asked.

"I think not."

"That is a man's view, and a woman's charm," he added.

"You speak as though you understood them."

"No man does."

"Some pretend to," and she laughed. "Now there is Gildo, for instance. A woman has no mystery for

him. He can tell you what each would do under given circumstances—or thinks he can."

Gildo is a fool, thought Lorenzo. He said aloud, "I suppose they all have certain characteristics in common. For instance, it would be unusual if a woman should take a poker and kill a mouse instead of standing on a chair and screaming." He placed his cup upon the table.

"Another cup, signore?"

"Thank you, no." He offered her a cigarette. She took one, lighted it and returned to the divan.

"Will you throw that scarf over my feet, signore?" she asked.

"If you insist."

"Why do you say that?" she asked.

"I like a glimpse of a pretty foot."

"I insist," she said coldly. He leaned over her and arranged the scarf, pressing one dainty slipper gently. She moved her foot a little and blew a cloud of smoke into the air, but said nothing.

Lorenzo looked at her a moment. "I should be going," he said.

"Why hurry?"

"The formalities," he smiled. "This is my first call."

"I thought we had agreed to dispense with the formalities, the trivial ones," she added, as he bent toward her ever so slightly.

"Then you will dine with me?"

"Would that be trivial?"

"It would be a great pleasure to me."

"Really?"

"Yes, really."

"Then I think I will."

"Thank you," he said.

"It is not a promise."

"I will try to persuade myself that it is one." He rose. "I hate to go."

"You must, then?"

"Yes." He took her hand and held it closely and looked searchingly into her deep eyes. "Will you try and be a little kind to me?" he said, and kissed her fingers.

"I will try," she smiled.

He turned the hand over and kissed the warm palm.

She rang the silver bell.

"When shall it be?" he asked.

"Come to-morrow and we shall see," she whispered, and pressed his hand. "The signore's hat and stick, Sophia," she said to the maid.

When he had gone she lay back on the couch and lighted a second cigarette. They are all alike, these men. She blew a few little rings and watched them fade. She smoked thoughtfully for some time, smiled a little, then curled up and went to sleep. Gildo found her so an hour later. He was not in good humor; he had lost considerably more than he cared to think about that afternoon at his club, and some of his creditors were becoming quite intolerable. He had just come from an interview with one of the worst.

"Giulia," he called sharply, "where are you?"

"Here," she replied, yawning sleepily. "What's the matter?"

"Matter enough. Why aren't you dressed? We are dining with the Gabrieles at nine and here it is nearly eight and you have not begun to dress."

"Well, that need not bother you."

"It bothers me considerably," he spluttered. "It is not right to keep people waiting."

"Oh, run away. Don't trouble about me. My maid and I will attend to that."

He stood for a little fuming silently. He was a small man who tried to make up for his lack of stature

by an assumption of considerable dignity. He was very vain of his appearance none the less, and had a tendency to overdress. His clothes were cut by the best tailors and usually were a little in advance of the fashions.

He looked at his wife sharply for a moment, then stuck out his narrow chest and said, "I pay the bills of this establishment, and while you favor it with your presence you will do as I say." Then he slammed the door and went to his room.

Giulia made a little courtesy and a face at the closed door. "And you my little man, will say pretty much what I wish in the long run." She walked into her own room and summoned her maid.

"The idea!" she said.

Lorenzo hailed a cab as he left the apartment and ordered the driver to take him to his club. He was at a loss how to kill the time remaining before dinner. It was but half-past six, and he did not dine until nine. His nature was such that he could bear anything better than inactivity. He had very little reserve on which to draw when left to his own resources. He cared nothing for nature. Forests were groups of so many trees with a certain commercial value; it did not matter whether they were green with tender buds in the soft Spring or multi-colored in the late Autumn; a lake was a lake, no more, no less. The sky, he rarely noticed; it was merely an index of the weather. Books were useless, poetry sickened him; art usually made him laugh, and music he abominated. As for religion, a good thing for the poor, no doubt; but as for Salvador Lorenzo, he was a Jansenist.

His acquaintances did not suspect this utter lack of appreciation, for his feelings were always carefully disguised. He surrounded himself by all that was beautiful; what others admired he bought. He had no friends and wished for none. He believed there was

no such thing as disinterested friendship, and this opinion was largely confirmed by his observations in the shallow society in which he moved. Where there were two friends there were two unequal fortunes. To him even vice was artificial.

As he drove through the early evening dusk he moved restlessly upon the seat; he clasped and unclasped his hands, drummed with his fingers on the cushions; lighted a cigarette and threw it away; cursed the horse, the driver, the *guardie* regulating the traffic at the corners. The delay was a little longer than he could stand, so he jumped from the hack, paid the driver and rushed on, on foot. He did not know why he hurried. He felt the need of action, he must keep moving.

He hurried into his club, and looked into the reading room. There was no one there with whom he cared to bother. He then went to the billiard room and made a match, fifty lire the game. He drank two absinthe *frappes,* won both games, and then went home to dinner.

CHAPTER X.

Rosa had just finished giving Cyrano a bath; the puppy fought hard at first, but finally submitted to the ordeal. He had been nicely soaped and rinsed and dried with a coarse towel. Rosa watched him capering about, rolling on the grass and running in circles at top speed. She was very pretty and very happy, a little flushed, her eyes sparkling with excitement. She held her arms akimbo, her apron spotted and wet where the water had splashed over her in her struggles with Cyrano. After a time he grew tired, lay down in the sun and went to sleep. Miguel was stretched in a hammock.

It was the hottest hour of the day when the slightest exertion was a task. A gentle breeze stirred the leaves of the red cedars and spilled the fragrance from the peonies, iris and sweet-william, growing in the garden; a bird trilled now and then, breaking the deep silence. It was very peaceful. Miguel stretched and yawned. Why could it not always have been so? Why had she not lived to enjoy this perfect peace with him and with Rosa? He had this little cottage on the hill with its quiet comfort and the houses in Milano which returned him between four thousand and four thousand, five hundred lire a year; it was ample for their simple needs.

Ambition had passed him by; after the years of suffering and stress he was well content to settle down quietly and enjoy that which the good God had provided. He craved neither riches nor fame; Rosa, his little home, his good friends, Pietro and the signora, they were enough.

He thought of those toiling in the city, consumed by

the lust for more, more, always living up to, and too often beyond their means, in a vain display, content with nothing, ever striving for that just beyond their grasp.

He pitied those poor men of large means consumed by land hunger. Money could not buy happiness. He smiled. The poor fools did not know. Here the days slipped by unnoticed, brimming over with peaceful content and quiet joy. He would not change with Vittorio Emanuele in his palace at Rome, he thought.

Rosa came and stood beside him.

"Are you awake, *padre?*" she whispered.

"Yes, *carissima,* what is it?" he asked, opening his eyes.

"The signora wished me to go to Como to order some things," and she held out a list. "Is there anything I may do for you, *padre?*"

"No thank you, dear; keep in the shade as much as possible, and don't hurry."

"All right." She kissed him. *"Addio!"* she said, and walked toward the gate.

"Oh, Rosa!"

"Yes, *padre.*"

"You might stop at the post office and see if there is a letter."

"But, *padre,* this is not nearly the first of the month!"

"I know, *mia cara,* but there might be something."

They both laughed; it was the usual joke when Rosa went to Como. The only mail that ever came to them was the remittance from the broker in Milano enclosing the monthly rent of the five little houses on the Via Pinamonte.

"Very well, *padre,* but don't be disappointed."

She passed through the gate smiling, and disappeared.

Cyrano stood beside the hammock, Miguel's hand

on his neck. As the gate clicked he released him, the dog ran at the fence, made two or three futile efforts to jump it and returned disconsolately to Miguel and lay down, his head between his paws, his eyes watching the road.

Rosa walked down the hill, through a forest of walnut and chestnut trees, splashes of brilliant green against the more sombre grey of the olive trees; wild laurel grew profusely in great patches lightened here and there by wild oleanders of many colors. The air was soft and sweet and cooled by a delicious breeze from the mountains across the lake. Rosa entered the town near the railway station and continued along the shore of the lake. She glanced into the gardens of the Hotel Plinius. They looked very pretty and gay; handsomely dressed men and women strolled about the walks or lounged in the rustic Summer houses or under the bright awnings. Two little girls in white with wide sashes, one blue, one pink, played at the foot of a statue of the elder Pliny. They looked very nice, and Rosa would have liked to have played with them, but she realized that she would not be welcome. She glanced at her gingham frock, made at considerable pains by the signora; she noticed for the first time that it was not pretty, and she was ashamed of her bare brown feet. With a growing feeling of discontent she walked on to Piazza Cavour, near the harbor, and turned to the left. Many people were seated in front of a *caffe* beneath a huge green and white awning, sipping cool drinks in long glasses and eating pink and white ices. It all looked very attractive and everybody seemed to be having a good time. Rosa began to realize that she was rather warm and very thirsty. She sighed a little and went on through the short Via Plinius to the Piazza del Duomo; then she walked along under the arcade to a little shop displaying many postcards and various edibles in its

rather dirty window. She pushed aside the heavy canvas curtain that covered the entrance and walked in. An old woman came forward to meet her, her hair tied in a scarlet kerchief and her brown face seamed with deep wrinkles. Her eyes twinkled kindly as she saw Rosa.

"Ah, *mia cara,* you have come to see the old *nonna* again."

"Yes, *nonna,* and I have brought you quite a long list this time. The signora says we are always running out of everything at once; it is a great nuisance."

The woman took the list and ran her sharp eyes over it. "Will you rest after your long walk, little one?"

"I think not, thank you, I loitered along the way, and you know it takes longer to go up than it does to come down the hill, but I would like a glass of water, *nonna.*" Everyone in Como called this kindly old woman grandmother.

"You will have some lemonade." she said, and went into a back room. When she returned she carried a long glass in which the ice tinkled pleasantly. Rosa sipped it.

"Oh, thank you," she said, "it is delicious." She climbed up on a high stool and answered the many questions put to her in rapid succession: How was the good signore, her father, and the kind signora, her cousin? Was the garden doing well? Would there be many grapes? It had been so dry, and had that abominable puppy eaten himself to death yet? And many more besides. Rosa answered them as best she could. At last she put down her empty glass and slipped from the stool.

"I must go. Thank you for the lemonade, it was very refreshing." She kissed the wrinkled cheek. "Be sure and send the things early in the morning," she added.

The old woman smiled—Rosa was very old-fashioned, and such a child. She walked to the street with her, and calling good wishes for those at home, watched her disappear in the crowd.

Rosa continued up the west side of the Piazza del Duomo to the post office, where much to her surprise the clerk handed her a letter. She turned it over carefully, a little dazed. She looked at a calendar suspended on the wall. It was dated the twenty-first of July; it was so easy to lose track of the days in the little cottage on the hill. She hurried out and took a short cut, avoiding the quay, and passed through the Porta Torre to the open country beyond.

As she walked on, a grave foreboding came over her; she felt intuitively that it was evil news she carried. What could it be? The letter was postmarked Milano. The road up the hill had never seemed so long.

She passed the stone on which she usually rested, and looked back upon the lake and valley below; she passed the locust tree with the bittersweet clinging to it in graceful loops; she passed all of the old familiar places where she loved to linger so well.

She burst open the gate and went straight to Miguel, who sat reading on the step; she ignored the puppy, who barked and capered around her joyfully.

"There was a letter, *padre,*" she said in an awed voice, "what can it be?"

Miguel took the letter from her and looked at it carefully.

"It is from Palina e Cie, the brokers," he said, probably something about repairs." His voice sounded a little uncertain. It was unusual; they always took up complaints and necessary alterations in their monthly letters with the remittances.

"What day of the month is it, Rosa?"

"The twenty-first, *padre*. I looked at the calendar in the post office."

"Strange," he muttered, and broke the seal.

He read it through twice. Rosa watched him anxiously. He paled a little, then smiled. "It might be worse, *cara mia*. The little houses in Milano have burned to the ground. They were old and are covered by insurance. We will rebuild with finer ones; it will probably be much better in the end."

Rosa drew a sharp breath of relief and swallowed hard. That was all then; it amounted to nothing after all. The houses in Milano were very far away and intangible to her mind. *Padre* said they could be rebuilt and it would be much better.

She laughed. "I was so frightened, *padre*."

"It is nothing, child," he said, and drew her to him.

The balance to his credit in the bank, which he had saved little by little from the monthly payments would carry them over very nicely the few months necessary for rebuilding; it was nothing and he patted her shoulder.

"Perhaps when the new buildings are completed we may go to Milano, you and I, for a little holiday. Then you will see the Duomo with the wonderful marble pinnacles and the tower like lace against the blue sky, and the beautiful paintings, the corso and the shops, the big buildings surrounding the many squares and perhaps there will be a performance in the arena, or a matinee at La Scala, who can say?"

"Oh, *padre*," Rosa cried eagerly.

"Would you like it, *carissima*?"

"Oh, so much, *padre*."

"Well, we shall see, we shall see," and he turned to his book.

Rosa ran off joyfully to tell the signora the good news, the puppy bounding along at her side.

Miguel tried to read, but could not concentrate his

mind on the subject before him; he thought of the burned houses and how necessary they were to their comfort, but there could be very little loss, if any, as they were well protected by the insurance. Insurance, he thought, was a wonderful thing; at a small yearly expense capital could be protected. How necessary it was to one of small means! He, by a little forethought, was able to sit back and laugh at what might have been a very serious misfortune.

He recalled that when the property had come to him at the death of a maiden aunt of advanced age, there had been no insurance on the buildings, she putting aside a certain sum each year to a special amount with which she practically insured herself.

That was very well, he thought, when property was widely scattered, and made up of several parcels as hers had been, but insurance was the thing in a case like his own, where there was but a single property.

Miguel was not sure of the exact amount he carried. He went into the cottage; his brokers must be instructed and he would have a look at the policy.

In a few minutes he came out and resumed his seat upon the steps. Somewhere he heard Rosa laugh and the puppy bark. He sat with his hands clasped between his knees, his face drawn and haggard. His policy had expired on the nineteenth. The little houses burned in Milano were a heap of smouldering ruins and a total loss.

CHAPTER XI.

"It is more than a coincidence," said Pietro.

"I am afraid so, my friend," Miguel agreed.

"Have you any suspicion?" Pietro asked, leaning across the table. They were sitting on the walk before the Caffe Plinio in the Piazza Cavour.

Miguel looked across the piazza to the lake, his hands clenched. "You know whom I suspect," he said. Pietro nodded.

"Well, my dear friend, did you come to me for advice?"

"Yes."

"Then, to-morrow you and I go to Milano. If we can prove to our own satisfaction that Lorenzo knew of your insurance and that it expired on the nineteenth we make him pay over to you sixty thousand lire, if we have to wring his neck."

"And you will go with me? No, that is too much, you have your own affairs."

"Miguel, listen. I could have no affairs big enough to interfere with my going. I will go to Milano or wherever he may go if it takes my last soldo and my last breath. In the years past I stood by, not fully realizing, but now I will lay down my life to fight this brigand for you and the little Rosa."

"I thank you, Pietro," Miguel said simply.

For a time they were both silent, looking into the past and thinking of the future, two stalwart men willing to go to any extreme to protect their own, for their cause was common now.

The little comedy of life played itself before them, but they did not notice. A professional beggar stopped

before the entrance of the *caffe*. Two men approached, one a very wealthy American with an international reputation for well directed philanthropy, the other a poor clerk who had saved a few hundred dollars for a long dreamed of vacation in the land of romance. The fakir allowed the rich man to pass unnoticed, and implored a little help, for the love of God, of the clerk. He paused, looked at the crippled beggar, hesitated, then opened his lean purse and handed him a lire. Two women approached a hackman and, in hesitating Italian, asked how much he would charge to drive them to the Villa L'Olmo. He replied in a rapid burst of dialect, no word of which they could understand. The elder woman, who evidently suffered from some throat affliction, motioned with her lips in a manner that was quite comprehensible though inaudible. "Perhaps we can find one who speaks English." Then she sank her chin between her shoulders and smiled, two perpendicular lines forming from her chin to her eyes, the flesh standing in little puffs about her collar. The younger woman made another effort in Italian equally unsatisfactory, and finally pointed to a line in a book entitled "Readv Reference to Italian Phrases." The driver shrugged his shoulders and spread his hands. He could not read, he said, "but if the ladies would speak English." The young woman blushed and made the bargain, while the elder woman took her place in the *cittadine,* her chin still sunk in her collar, her mouth spread in a grin, her eyes dancing.

Miguel lighted a cigar and turned to Pietro.

"Dear friend," he said, "I have been thinking that it would be best if you were to remain in the background in this matter. You know Lorenzo as well as I, and if anything should happen to me, you would be the only one left to look after the little one."

Pietro was thoughtful. "Perhaps you are right,

Miguel," he said, "but I will go to Milano with you and if you fail, we will try together."

The two friends rose and walked along the quay to the Giardino Pubblico, where they selected a shady seat and looked over the lake toward Cernobbio. The mountains ranged around the lake like the tiers of an arena. Boats plied to and fro, breaking the smooth surface in widening ripples, which gradually grew and vanished. Pietro glanced at his friend. The strong profile was set in hard lines of determination. The eyes looked steadily forward seeing nothing. His strong hands were clenched, resting on his knee, and the little muscles in his jaw were tense and knotted.

Pietro nodded to himself with satisfaction; the figure before him denoted courage and strength. He did not wish to fight, but if Lorenzo laid a hand upon Rosa, he must answer to Miguel Rappold and after that to Pietro Manzoni.

Finally Miguel broke the silence, speaking in a low voice. "Pietro," he said, "I would rather lose the little houses in Milano and know that it was an accident, than recover the sixty thousand lire and know that Lorenzo had a hand in their destruction. The houses meant much to me, they meant comfort and freedom from worry, but I am strong and not yet old. I can work and take care of the little one, but if he is in this, it means the same anxiety, the fighting in the dark that nearly drove me mad in the old days, never knowing from which quarter he would strike next. It means living in anxiety day and night, fear always with me. But," he rose and faced Pietro, "my friend, I made a vow to God. When I came to Como and took the little cottage on the hill that we have learned to love so well, I made a solemn vow to God," he repeated quietly, "that if any harm came to Rosa through him I would strangle him with my own hands. I now renew that vow, and if the worst should happen, I leave the

little one to you, Pietro. Love her, protect her, do the best you can for her, my friend."

Pietro sat stolidly quiet. "You may depend on it," he said.

"I know it," Miguel continued. "She is a good child, *fratello.*" Pietro's eyes grew a little dim.

"She will be a good woman; God grant that I may live to see her then."

Miguel resumed his seat. "I have no desire to be dramatic," he said, smiling a little sadly, but I wanted you to know the thoughts in my heart. Perhaps sometimes I have appeared weak, I do not know. Twice I have almost killed him, but since Rosa has grown to be so much to me, I have been cowardly, perhaps, well content to live secluded on the hill with you, *mia fratello,* and the signora as my only companions."

He placed his hand on Pietro's shoulder. "And now we must go. Henceforth you are my brother. What I have, however little or much, is yours and Rosa will look to you when I am not by as her natural protector. I can say no more, Pietro, the little one loves you dearly; be true to her." They walked silently back together as far as the Piazza Volla, after agreeing to meet at eight the next morning at the Ferrovie Nord. They parted as good friends do in Lombardy.

"*Addio, fratello,*" each said.

Pietro walked on toward the Duomo, and turned in to the Via Vittorio Emanuele in the direction of his lodgings.

Miguel climbed the hill slowly, often pausing to look back on the valley he loved. His thoughts were sad. He felt that the old feud was about to be reopened in all its bitterness. He believed that it was more than coincidence that destroyed his little fortune the night after the expiration of the policy, and who else would have had the incentive to burn them? Who

else would have dared? No, he was very sure, and his reason told him it was Lorenzo. If so, he must fight for existence, for Rosa's life, perhaps, for he knew well that if Lorenzo had done this, the old hatred must still be strong; he would not stop at this, but would try to hound him to despair.

He sat down on the rock at the top of the hill to rest. Rosa must know nothing of this, yet it might be as Pietro hoped, that they could force Lorenzo to make restitution; then the buildings could be rebuilt and she would never need to know. If nothing could be done, well, that would be time enough to tell the child. He sighed and murmured a prayer that she might never know.

He heard a sound behind him and turned. It was the puppy, ears up, nostrils quivering and the hair gradually rising along his back.

"Hello, puppy!" he called, "what are you doing here?" At the sound of his voice the dog bounded forward, frisky in his welcome. Rosa straightened up and looked over a clump of laurel behind which she had been gathering wild flowers.

"Is it you *padre?*" she asked joyfully, and ran to him. "It was lonesome at home without you."

He kissed her. "Would you miss me very much, *carissima,* if I were to go away for a few days?"

"Yes, indeed," she said, patting his cheek, "if you go away you must take me with you."

"But that is impossible, *mia cara.* Pietro and I go to Milano to-morrow, and we may be away several days."

"Oh, *padre,* must you go?"

"Yes, child."

"Can't you take me?"

"It is impossible."

The tears stood in her eyes.

"But you will be my brave little girl, won't you?" he asked.

"I will try, *padre.*"

"And now, *carissima,* let's make our last night a jolly one."

She brushed the tears from her eyes and smiled up at him.

"All right, *padre,* let's sing the *Marcia Reale.*"

Hand in hand they tramped up the dusty road singing the martial air lustily. The signora rushed to the door as they swung into the garden. Miguel and Rosa halted before her, clicked their heels in military fashion and brought their hands to their foreheads in salute.

"Commander of the commissariat," said Rosa, "I have the honor to report two very hearty appetites."

CHAPTER XII.

Something was coming up the hill. Rosa could hear a faint tinkling. She leaned over the gate and looked down the road. The puppy heard the noise, too, and turned his head from side to side listening intently; then he pushed his head out through the palings of the fence to investigate. It was a pretty tight squeeze, and when he tried to withdraw his head, his ears spread out and held him fast; he pulled and wriggled with all his might, but he could not squirm loose. Rosa went to his aid. The boards widened a trifle toward the top, so, lifting him up, she managed to release him. The dog sniffed himself all over carefully and scratched his neck thoughtfully, then fully reassured, he snapped at a butterfly that fluttered past. Rosa laughed at him a little, calling him a foolish puppy, and returned to the gate. She could hear someone calling now, and as she looked, two horses, one driven before the other, appeared over the crest of the hill, drawing a huge black wagon. Then a man followed, walking, and holding the single cord with which he guided them. Next came two women dressed in bright colors with kerchiefs, one red, the other bright yellow covering their heads. Then another wagon appeared exactly like the first, and this in turn was followed by a man, a woman and two children, a boy of about twelve, and a little girl, probably about seven.

The little caravan stopped, the two men exchanged a few words and looked in the direction of the cottage, shading their eyes with their hands. Rosa called to the signora who walked down to the gate and stood beside her.

"Gypsies," she said.

The woman and children climbed into the wagons, sitting upon a long wide seat in front that looked very comfortable. As they drew nearer, Rosa could see that they were all very dark with black hair and eyes; the men with long, drooping mustaches, slouch hats, bright scarfs and scarlet sashes about their waists, the women very gay in bright colors and cheap jewelry, the necklaces and bangles clinking pleasantly as they moved. The first wagon was nearly opposite now, and Rosa could see that the younger woman on the seat in front was very pretty, and held a tiny baby in her arms; the other was quite old. Her hair was gray and her brown face was a network of fine wrinkles. The man walking beside the front wheel was big and strong looking. He smiled, showing his white teeth, crying *buon giorno* and *addio,* almost in the same breath. He raised his hat as he passed. Rosa and the signora nodded pleasantly, and the women smiled and waved their hands.

Rosa noticed that there were windows in the sides of the wagon and several pails and pots swinging to and fro beneath it. "And look, signora," she cried, "there is the chimney. It is a little house on wheels." By this time the second wagon was in front of the gate. A colt trotted beside one of the horses, and a mongrel dog darted about from the wagon to the bushes and back again, occasionally jumping and barking at the colt. At this the mother would lay her ears back and show the whites of her eyes. The colt would trot on a little, then wait and crowd close to the mare. The man picked up a stone and threw it at the dog, who dropped his tail between his legs, and shrank away to the farther side of the wagon; then, catching sight of Cyrano running up and down excitedly in the garden, he ran to him and sniffed at him through the fence, wagging his tail.

Rosa did not like the appearance of this man as well

as that of the other, but the woman was quite nice looking with pleasant eyes and glistening teeth and the children were very pretty, so she replied pleasantly to their salute and waved her hand to the little girl until she disappeared behind a turn in the road.

When they were gone, Rosa walked back to the cottage with the signora.

"It must be fun, gypsying," she said.

"Hard work, I should think," the signora answered.

"But it must be very pleasant to live out of doors like that, traveling from place to place."

"I prefer living in a house with a kitchen in it."

Rosa thought it might be rather crowded at night with the signora in one of the wagons, but said nothing.

"They are a bad lot as a rule; awful thieves."

Rosa thought they looked very pleasant and interesting.

They sat on the little porch for awhile, then Rosa climbed into the signora's lap.

"What a long day it has been, twice-cousin," she said.

The sun had just disappeared behind Mount Bolleto, staining the mist overhanging it a delicate rose color that promised a warm morrow. Overhead the sky was a soft blue with a few scattered clouds, mere puffs of silver vapor floating about lazily. There was a great chattering as the birds settled for the night in the surrounding forest, which loomed black in the gathering twilight. Rosa shivered a little and tightened her hold on the signora's soft hand.

"It looks awfully lonesome over there," she whispered, nodding toward the woods. The signora worked steadily.

"Why don't you say something?" Rosa persisted.

"There does not seem to be much to say, *carissima,*" said the signora, who felt the magic of the hour and

the quiet spell of the forest nearly as much as the child.

"I should like you to tell me a story, but yours are all ghost stories. Don't you know any about fairies and little princesses?"

"I am afraid not, dear."

"Well, I think you had better learn a few if *padre* is to be away long."

Rosa smiled, trying to be cheerful.

"Do you know any funny ones?" she asked after a little.

The signora admitted that she did not, and Rosa sighed.

"I wish something would happen to cheer me up," she said.

The long shadows gradually thickened into one big blotch of gloom; the birds were quiet, and Rosa fancied a little star, far in the north, winked at her.

They were quiet for a time; finally the good woman said almost apologetically, "You see I never had any little girls to tell stories to."

Rosa reached a little hand to the signora's face and patted it. "Oh, I don't mind," she said, "I just thought it might be nice, but I don't mind."

"Perhaps we had better go in, it is growing cooler."

A breeze began to rustle the leaves overhead; it smelled fresh and moist, as though it had come a long way over wet fields. The garden was brightened for a second by a flash of lightning, and after a few moments a low muttering jarred the silence, and a black cloud spread overhead, hiding the stars one by one.

"I am afraid we are going to have a storm," said the signora.

"It sounds a long way off," Rosa replied.

As the signora fumbled for the lamp in the dark, the lightning flashed again, throwing a weird green

glimmer over the little room. The interval between the flash and the thunder was not so long as before.

"It is coming this way."

A flood of light enveloped the room as the lamp flamed up. They both felt a little more at ease. A gust of wind blew the curtains violently. Rosa went to close the windows, while the signora bolted the door. The puppy sat in the middle of the floor and watched them closely. After a while he walked to Miguel's chair and sniffed at it; then he went to the kitchen. In a moment he returned and walked up the stairs to the floor above. They heard him pattering about from room to room. "He is looking for *padre,*" Rosa whispered, her voice trembling a little.

The signora nodded. Presently he came back, jumped up in Miguel's chair and lay down. They exchanged glances.

There was a sharp flash followed almost immediately by a terrific peal of thunder. A flurry of rain splashed against the windows; then it came down steadily in torrents, beating on the roof with a steady pour, which they could hear dripping in the tin leader and flowing off in streams. The wind whipped the trees in a fury; they could hear the branches lashing about in the gale. The lightning flashed and the thunder pealed incessantly, one roll scarcely dying away before another followed, until it was impossible to tell where one left off and the other began. Rosa clung to the signora in terror.

"I wish *padre* were here," she whispered.

So do I, thought the signora, but when she spoke she tried to reassure the child. Even the puppy moved restlessly about the rooms. There was a blinding flash and a terrific explosion. The puppy jumped and growled.

"I am afraid," Rosa whispered.

"The worst is over now, *carissima.*"

"That struck very near." Rosa opened one eye and raised her face a little from the signora's shoulder. The storm continued to be very violent, but as the signora had predicted, it gradually passed on. The flashes became less frequent, and the noise of the thunder came to them faintly as from a great distance. The signora sighed with relief; she was terribly afraid of lightning, and had Miguel been at home she would have been lying on her bed with her face buried in her pillow, but left alone with Rosa, she had taken her courage in both hands and made a brave fight to overcome her fear and comfort the child. All heroes do not go to war.

"May I sleep with you, to-night?" Rosa asked.

"To be sure, *carissima,* we will move your bed right up beside mine."

That was not exactly what Rosa wished; she would have liked to have crawled in beside the signora and have been petted and babied a little, but it was better than sleeping in her little room all alone, and then, she thought, the signora was very big and heavy and might roll on her in the night. Perhaps it was better, after all. Perhaps the signora would let her hold her hand for a little while.

It was quite a task to move Rosa's cot from one room to the other. They found it would not go through the door between the room, unless taken apart. When at last everything was arranged satisfactorily, and they were ready for bed, they prayed silently, kneeling side by side. Then the signora tucked Rosa in carefully, kissed her and blew out the candle.

Rosa thought the signora had never looked so tremendous as she did then in her loose white nightgown; she was not sleepy, although it was long after her usual bedtime. The excitement of the storm had left her nerves quivering and her eyes wide open. She

tried to see the familiar objects in the room. She could just distinguish the bureau in the corner and the faint outline of a chair by the window. The signora was exhausted and soon began to breathe heavily with a little whistling sound. Rosa turned restlessly; rising on one elbow she fixed her pillow and lay down again. It was very still outside; the wind had died down and there was no sound save that of the water trickling in the tin pipe from the roof to the ground. It was rather melancholy, and she was very lonesome.

A longing for companionship stole over her; she wished her pretty little mother had lived and could take her in her arms and comfort her. The signora was snoring in a monotonous way. Where was the *caro padre?* She voiced a little prayer for his safety, and one for Pietro, too; that seemed to give her a little comfort. Then she planned cheerfully what they would do when they all went to Milano together. They would have Gelato on the sidewalk before a handsome café, and watch the gay crowds walking up and down, and she would have a pretty white dress with a blue sash, perhaps. The puppy moved restlessly. She raised her head and listened. The signora was audibly asleep; she thought she would not mind if the puppy crawled in with her, just this once, when she was so blue.

"Cyrano!" she called softly. She snapped her fingers gently and leaned over and stroked the dog's head; it gave her a sense of comfort to touch anything warm and living. She patted the bed beside her.

"Come on," she whispered. The dog jumped up beside her. "Lie down here." She touched the sheet. The dog laid down and stretched sleepily. Rosa put her soft round arm about him and fell asleep.

CHAPTER XIII.

Lorenzo fretted through a seemingly endless day. The signora, his wife, had left that morning for Altdorf, in the mountains near Lucerne. He had gone to the station, unwillingly, and at last had the satisfaction of seeing the train pull out. It had scarcely started when, with a sigh of relief, he rushed through the waiting room to the street, hailed a *cittadine* and was driven rapidly to his office.

He summoned a clerk at once.

"How are the renewals progressing?" he asked.

"Very well, signore, fully eighty per cent. have renewed." Replies from many of the others can hardly be expected for a few days, as they live mostly at some distance.

"Bring me a list of those who have not responded."

"*Si* signore."

Lorenzo walked about the office restlessly; he glanced at his mail and made a few notes, perfunctorily. Then he went to the window and looked out. It opened upon the Piazza del Duomo. A ceaseless flow of humanity passed beneath him, nearly everyone appeared to have a purpose. Some hurried into one or another of the buildings facing the square, others passed into the side streets, while many disappeared beneath the large dome of the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele. A few guides and post-card vendors lounged lazily on the steps of the cathedral, accosting all who appeared to be strangers in the city.

Lorenzo turned away.

"Bah! the cattle," he said with a sneer, sitting down at his desk. He opened the morning edition of the "Coriera della Sera." He read over the headlines rap-

idly, glanced at the quotations and foreign cables and cast it from him with a muttered *"Che diavolo!"*—"why don't the fool hurry?"

At last the clerk returned with the list. He glanced hastily down the column and found the name he sought.

"Good," he thought, "It will be impossible for him to renew in time."

"Very well," he said aloud to the clerk, "if you do not hear from these within the week, send them further notices."

It was too early for lunch, and he crossed to the Galleria and took a seat before the Caffe Biffi, where he ordered absinthe and watched the never-failing stream of people of many nationalities.

For the lack of a better occupation he watched two foreigners bargaining for a picture displayed in a window opposite. They stood with the shopkeeper upon the walk. It was necessarily a pantomime to him, as they were too far away for him to overhear their conversation.

"How could the Milanese art dealers live without the fool tourist?" Lorenzo thought.

He strolled through the Galleria, looking aimlessly into the windows to the Piazza Della Scala, passed the Palazzo Marino and the fine monument of Leonardo da Vinci, surrounded by four of his pupils. At the Scala he turned in to the Via Giuseppe Verdi and lunched in the gardens of the Caffe Cova.

When he had finished luncheon he glanced at his watch. Pesta! it was scarcely four. He ordered an invincible, and sipped his *nebiolo*.

The day had been almost insufferable; the luncheon had been very bad, or so it seemed, to his particular taste; the fish had been underdone, the *cardi* too highly seasoned; the wine was not properly cooled; his nerves were on edge and required constant stimulant. He

called for *vinofino,* which he tossed off and sat quietly for a few minutes; then glanced at his watch again. Ten minutes after four. He called for his check. The chatter was unbearable; he would stroll about until it was time to call upon the Contessa, he smiled cynically. He would teach the Contessa that she was not dealing with a boy to be flirted and coquetted with, but with Salvador Lorenzo, who was not to be denied.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Contessa stood near an open window in the *petite salon* adjoining her bedroom, which she preferred infinitely to the other rooms of the apartment. It was less formal in its furnishings and had a decidedly feminine atmosphere. It was a woman's conception of what a room should be. The few pictures hung on the silken walls were subdued in coloring and taken more or less from amorous subjects. The chairs and couch were cool looking and very luxurious. The portieres hid but did not quite conceal the bedroom, lending a charm of delicate laces and exquisite perfumes. Blue was the prevailing color with a suggestion of old rose merging gradually into the pink of the room beyond.

She was arranging some flowers in the tall vases scattered here and there. Her maid had just brought them in, and although there had been no card attached, she knew Lorenzo had sent them. She more than suspected his desire to disguise his real feelings in even the little things of life. She felt sure had he followed his natural inclination he would have sent warm red roses; consequently he had sent white.

The room was very attractive. She glanced about to see if the roses were arranged as effectively as possible.

"If a man does not lose his head here, he never will," she thought. She went into the bedroom and sat before her dressing table. Her maid had but recently dressed her and arranged her hair. There were many things a maid might do, but some little touches always remained to be added by Giulia herself. Her complexion could not be improved; Sophia was a jewel. Her eyebrows were satisfactory. She looked at her hands; the nails were perfect. Her hair she thought was a little too

flat, ever so little. She carefully disengaged a curl or two. Then she dropped some liquid from a glass tube, just one drop, in each eye. She took a little phial from a secret compartment of her jewel box and shook out a pellet which she placed in her handkerchief.

She removed her rings, even her wedding ring, slipped these into the casket and took out a brooch, a single blood red ruby of unusual size set in a platinum band. She hesitated. It was very plain, but wonderfully striking. She pinned it amongst the laces at her throat.

A French clock on the mantel chimed five. She walked into the salon and sank into a deep chair and opened a book. She was a consummate actress, but believed science should be brought to the assistance of art whenever possible. She held the handkerchief with the tiny pellet in her hand.

"Signor Lorenzo," announced the maid.

Giulia simulated surprise. She hesitated a moment, glancing about the room, half rose, and then dropped back into her chair.

"Oh, well, show him in here," she said.

When the maid had gone she slipped the pellet into her mouth and swallowed it. Her eyes were very bright as Lorenzo entered the little room.

"How charming," he said as he kissed her fingers. "A very charming frame for a very beautiful woman," he added.

"Flatterer," the Contessa smiled, her lids drooping languidly over her eyes which burned brilliantly beneath. Lorenzo looked at her in amazement. Never had he seen her so before, her lids so heavy and drowsy, the eyes partially veiled and flashing.

This was not acting; surely he had been mistaken when he thought the Contessa had meant to play with him. There was passion in her glance, in her attitude of languid abandon.

He drew a chair close beside her and leaned over the back of it, looking down upon her. "You are very beautiful," he whispered.

She turned toward him for a moment.

"You are not very original," she retorted.

"You have driven every thought from my mind."

"Don't be foolish," she said with her lips, but her eyes commanded "go on."

"Is it foolish to love you?"

The Contessa opened her eyes wide in surprise.

"Is it so very foolish to love you?" he persisted.

"It might not be very wise," she laughed.

"Was love ever wise?" he queried.

He took her hand. It was very small and soft. She allowed him to keep it for a moment, then gently, she withdrew it; the denial was almost a caress.

"Won't you be kind?" he said, trying to recover it.

"Oh, if it will do you any good." She held her hand out frankly, palm up. He closed his fingers over it passively. It was not what he wished. The mere fact of holding her hand as the footman would hold the chambermaid's did not appeal to him; he was annoyed and thoughtful for a time, raging inwardly. She watched him covertly. He was about to release her hand. There was a slight pressure.

"You are very stupid, signore," she said finally.

Lorenzo did not reply.

"How long will your wife be away?" she asked, sweetly.

He dropped her hand and walked to the window in a rage. What was this woman trying to do? he wondered. It seemed she had made up her mind to aggravate and flaunt him. He would not stand it. He would go. He turned and faced her.

"My, you are angry!" she said, and smiled innocently. "What has gone wrong?"

"*Che diavolo!* Contessa, why do you aggravate me

so? Can't you see that I love you, that I am on fire?"

He walked toward her.

"Look at me, look in my eyes. Can you see nothing there? Tell me!"

Giulia looked him over critically, raising her eyes to his. She gazed at him long and intently, and Lorenzo paled a little under the scrutiny. He was not accustomed to meet look with look. After a little, he turned away.

The blood rushed back to his head, staining his face crimson. It was no longer a game; he was in deadly earnest. Perhaps he was incapable of love in its true sense, but passion at least consumed him. He wanted to take this woman in his arms, to crush her until she called out with pain, to see those deep eyes close, to feel those red warm lips pulsing and responding against his own.

Giulia laughed, and it was like a dash of cold water in his face. His confidence returned; he would play the game. He sat down calmly.

"Have you decided to dine with me?" he asked.

Giulia was a little disappointed; it was not what she had expected.

"No," she said slowly.

"I am sorry," he said, without any sincerity, "I had planned a very pleasant evening.

"It would not be right, we are both married."

"Why do you laugh?" she added, changing color.

"You surprise me. I did not realize you had so much consideration. Now, honestly, are you entirely sincere?" His voice was very precise; he was beginning to enjoy himself.

"I usually mean what I say." The color faded from her cheeks. They were both a little strained.

"It has been very warm the past few days." He was bound to be commonplace, and keep the conversation

ridiculously impersonal for a time. "I think I may take a little trip early in the week."

"That will be nice; where will you go?" She forced a yawn from behind her fingers.

Lorenzo smiled.

"I have been thinking of Trouville."

"I did not know that you liked long railway journeys."

How did she know that? he wondered.

"It is very gay this year, I understand. A friend who has just returned told me he had never seen so many beautiful women in his life."

"The place for you, undoubtedly; you will be sure to find many who are—what shall we say—unmarried?"

"I do not think they will bother me much."

The Contessa laughed. "I am sure it will be from no lack of effort on your part."

"Pardon me, you are mistaken."

"I do not think so."

"Then I will prove it; if I go to Trouville, I shall not go alone."

"Oh, the signora will go with you? How charming!"

"No, the signora will not go with me."

"And yet you will not go alone? How very interesting!"

He was silent.

"I wonder who she is?"

"It is good of you to give it a second thought."

"Pretty, of course?"

"Beautiful."

"That's what they all say."

"Is she from Milano?"

"You seem interested, Contessa."

"Not particularly; it makes conversation, that's all."

Lorenzo laughed.

"I am vain enough to think you are not pleased."

"Then your vanity misleads you. It is a matter of no consequence."

"It is useless for me to try to have the last word."

"By saying which, you mean to have it."

Lorenzo placed his finger on his lips, and shook his head.

"Won't you change your mind about dining with me?" he said, after a pause.

"Indeed, no; why should I?"

"Why should you, indeed?" he said, rising.

As Giulia reached for the bell he placed his hand on her arm.

"Please don't bother to call the maid," he said, "I can find my way out quite well, thank you. I brought my hat and stick with me."

She dropped her hand and rose from her chair.

"Thank you for a delightful afternoon," he said, taking her hand. With a quick movement he slipped his arm about her waist and drew her to him.

"Do you think you have been very kind?" he asked.

She did not answer.

"Do you?" he repeated.

"Let me go," she said, pushing against his chest with both hands.

He raised her chin and looked into her eyes.

"Answer me," he said. She closed her eyes. He kissed her on the mouth. Giulia did not turn away, but yielded to him for a moment, then she passed one arm about his neck and kissed him passionately.

"Now are you satisfied?" she said.

"No," he whispered.

"You must go." She struggled to be free.

"You will dine with me?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"To-night."

"I will be here at eight-thirty."

"You must go now."

"Good-bye," he said, kissing her again, "until to-night."

Lorenzo walked toward his club in a very contented frame of mind; everything was developing as he had planned. She would love him, of course. He was well pleased that it would be a little difficult. He enjoyed the hunt. He thought the Contessa might be induced to go to Trouville after all.

When he had gone, Giulia stood for a moment wiping her lips with the back of her hand.

"Bah, the brute!" She stamped her foot. "I should like to kill him."

She walked excitedly about the room.

"I must dine with him," she said thoughtfully, "and, who knows—I may have to go to Trouville!"

. . . . . .

Giulia dressed with great care. Her gown was a very handsome creation that hung closely to her figure in graceful lines and was cut quite low at the neck and back, from which her firm shoulders appeared in their rounded beauty. She looked herself over critically in a long pier glass.

"Shall I do, Sophia?" she asked smiling.

"Madame la Contessa is charming," the French maid answered, clasping her hands.

The Contessa was a little excited. The task she had set herself was very dangerous, but its accomplishment was very necessary. She hated Lorenzo with a loathing that made her shudder at the thought of his kisses, but yet it was the only way she could see to attain her end. "If I were a man!" she thought. "But I am not, so that settles it. I must fight in my own way."

Someone knocked.

"Come in," she called. Her husband looked in.

She saw him glance at her, hesitate, then step in and close the door behind him. He was flushed and his eyes glistened unnaturally. It seemed to Giulia that his under lip hung looser than ever under his mustache. She noticed, too, that it appeared a little damp and discolored.

"You can go," he said roughly to the maid.

Sophia hesitated, holding a light evening wrap of some filmy gray material and chiffon. She glanced uncertainly from the Conte to Giulia.

"Did you hear what I said?"

"Oui, monsieur." She hung the wrap carefully over a chair and walked toward the door.

"Sophia, you may button my gloves," Giulia said quietly.

"But, Giulia, I wish to speak to you alone."

"Well, wait. I am afraid I shall be late. It is bad form, you know."

"Then why didn't you start to dress earlier?"

"I was engaged."

Gildo pulled his mustache. He thought she was very beautiful, and was sorry she belonged to him. What a capital flirtation he might have had; but who ever thought of flirting with one's own wife! He started. He wondered if this had ever occurred to anyone else.

"Where are you going?" he asked sharply. She counted on her fingers.

"You flatter me by your interest. Let me see. You have not asked me that question in fourteen months."

"Pesta! why don't you tell me?"

"You're drunk."

"Sapristi! I've had but two drinks to-day."

They smell like twenty. Do eat something. There are some violette lozenges on that dresser, in the little filigree box. Yes, that's it." He was fumbling at the cover, holding his breath.

Then on the theory that if one were good two would be better, he slipped the candies into his mouth.

The gloves were buttoned.

"Thank you, Sophia; you need not wait. I shall probably be rather late. I can slip out of this dress myself. *Buona notte.*"

"*Buona notte,* Madame."

When she had gone Gildo sat down on a little gilt chair and furtively looked at himself in a mirror. He did not look as though he had been drinking; at least he thought he did not. He crossed his legs aggressively and turned to his wife.

"Now, Madame," he said, mimicing the maid, "will you be so kind as to inform me with whom you are dining? It has just occurred to me that you are looking rather well, and I might want you here."

Giulia bit her lip, which trembled a little.

"Come, come, out with it," he blustered.

She glanced at the clock. It was nearly eight.

"I am dining with the Gabrielles."

He laughed. "I wish you a pleasant evening."

She knew that he hated them both, ever since Signor Gabrielle had talked to him very plainly on the evils of gambling.

"*Addio,*" he said. "I may look in on you when I get home."

"Where are you going?" Giulia asked without any interest.

"Oh, I don't know; the Club, I suppose. Good night." He slammed the door.

Giulia sighed. He was becoming insufferable, but she knew that while dressing he would probably drink himself into a stupor and sleep until long after she had gone. She went into the salon. The windows were open. The streets had been sprinkled; the air seemed cool and fresh. She took a deep breath and listened. A carriage drew up and stopped. She

slipped into her wrap, turned out the light and met Lorenzo before he could ring.

"Sh!" she said. "Gildo is home. We must hurry."

CHAPTER XV

They dined that evening at the Caffe Cova. Lorenzo had reserved a private room with a little balcony overlooking the gardens, where they could hear the music and see the crowds without being seen; it was very attractive.

By mutual consent their conversation had been restricted to more or less trivial subjects. The dinner was excellent. Dennler had served the wines himself and personally supervised each dish as it was brought to them. They moved out on the balcony for their coffee and cigarettes.

Giulia leaned from the balcony and watched the crowd in the garden below. It was a lovely night. The moon, a little past the full, hung over Milano, lighting the streets and illuminating the white buildings with a silver mist. Lanterns and fairy lights twinkled among the shrubs. The Hungarian orchestra, brilliant in crimson coats, played a wild Magyar love song, now falling low in pleading only to break forth in an ecstasy of passion. The leader, however, found time to roll his eyes at some of the ladies sitting near the stand. Giulia watched him in amusement. Finally she called to Lorenzo to come and look. He leaned beside her on the rail. "Rather a motley collection," he said.

"Some of them are rather queer," she admitted.

"Do you see anyone you know?"

"Let's see. I have been looking at them collectively. The picture is very gay. Yes, there is Chauvenil and Bracci; and who is that at the table in the corner to the left? To be sure, it is Signor Gabrielle, and the signora, and their friend Madame Delmar, from

Lyon. How funny! I told Gildo I was dining with them." She laughed a little.

"I hope he does not happen in."

"Oh, it would not matter. He cares very little what I do. It was quite unusual for him to ask me, even, where I was going."

"Did he?"

"Yes, he was quite insistent, so I told him with the Gabrielles—he hates them both."

"*Sapristi!* speak of—there he is now!" Lorenzo leaned a little further back from the balcony.

Gildo swaggered down the central walk between the tables. An overdressed woman held his arm, and another man and woman followed. The proprietor met them halfway down the path. He was sorry, but at present there was not a seat to be had in the garden, but he could give them a table in the *petite salle à manger* near an open window, where they could hear the music.

Gildo looked about in search of a vacancy; his eyes met those of Signor Gabrielle, who looked at him reprovingly. There were two ladies with him. He recognized one as the signora—the other he did not look at. "Come on," he said to his friends; "we will go somewhere else."

Hastily he led the way to the street, summoned a *cittadine* and drove off.

Giulia, who had watched him closely, laughed.

"Rather amusing, is it not?" she asked. "Here am I dining alone with you, and he mistook Madame Delmar for me."

Lorenzo said nothing; he was pursuing a well-developed plan. He treated Giulia with considerable deference. He had not tried to make marked love to her in any way, but he assumed a protecting air, as though he had a right to take care of her, treating her very much as though she belonged to him. Giulia

noticed this and understood; she was glad that he restrained himself, but resented his familiar attitude.

When they were driving home some time later he took her in his arms and kissed her. "To-morrow, *carissima,*" he said. *"A rividerci!"*

Lorenzo went home, changed his clothes and stole away to the Airone Argentata. He ignored the she-wolf and, catching sight of Tano, went directly to him and sat down.

"I was detained," he said gruffly, and glanced at the clock behind the bar, which lacked but a few minutes of twelve.

"I was about to give you up," Tano said sulkily.

"Nonsense! I never forget."

"This waiting is uneasy work; in our business you never know but that the other fellow has been taken and——"

"You are afraid of that?"

"Well, I've seen a good deal of it."

"A man often suspects others of being what he himself is."

"Take care!"

"Have something. It may cheer you up." Lorenzo grinned and they walked to the bar.

"When is this affair scheduled, Hunchback?" he whispered.

"To-morrow night."

"Then I'll take brandy."

They took their glasses and returned to a table remote from the others, where they could talk without being overheard.

"Well, let's have it," Tano said at last.

"There are five frame houses on the Via Pinamonte, very old; here are the numbers." Lorenzo passed him a paper.

Tano glanced at it.

"You can easily get into the cellars unobserved,

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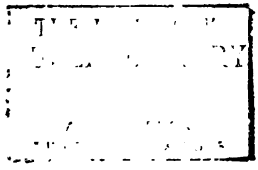
GIULIA RESENTED HIS FAMILIAR ATTITUDE.—*Page* 86.



where you will find plenty of combustible material. They are occupied by a number of families, so I have decided that evening, say eight o'clock, will be the best time. The tenants are then all on the streets and steps. I will create a diversion of some kind that will draw them all from the buildings. You can slip in and have everything in readiness. You had better use a time fuse; it will give you an opportunity to slip out of the neighborhood and establish an alibi."

"I'll take care of that."

"That's all; we had better not be seen too much together. Just do as I say. Here is one hundred lire on account; you get the balance to-morrow night here, if—you know!" He slouched off and disappeared through the little door at the end of the room.

A man and a woman had been interested witnesses of the conversation; although they could hear nothing of what was said, they watched the hunchback and Tano closely.

"What do you make of it?" she questioned when Lorenzo had gone.

"I don't know. The hunchback gave him money, I am sure of that. That means either that he is being paid, or has been given something on account for what he is about to do. I favor the latter supposition. If we are right, then whatever it may be will take place within twenty-four hours. They never give money in such cases until just before. All I have to do is to keep an eye on this one."

The speaker was dressed in a peasant's tunic; a two-days' beard made him appear rough and dirty. The woman was very like the others about the room, except that she wore a black patch over one eye and white cotton gloves on her hands. They appeared to be typical of the place and neighborhood and attracted no attention. When the man paid for their drinks he counted the *soldi* and *centesimi* over twice,

as though it were a difficult task, or lest he might give a copper too much. Tano walked to the bar, swallowed another brandy, and joined a little group watching a few men playing at dice. He looked on idly, leaning against the wall and puffing his cigarette; one of the players asked if he cared to join them.

"No," he said, shrugging his shoulders carelessly, "I have no money."

The stranger whispered to the woman and joined the group in time to hear this explanation, which he did not believe. He rightly surmised that the note was larger than he cared to change in this company.

"You do not play, signor?" he asked.

Tano looked at him suspiciously and said nothing.

"I am a stranger here," he continued unabashed. "I had a good friend who was here often, Tati; do you chance to know him?"

"No," Tano answered shortly. "I know no one."

"You are a stranger like myself. Good! you must have a drink."

Tano looked at the stranger steadily. "No," he said, "I do not want a drink."

He turned on his heel and walked from the place, slamming the street door behind him; he dodged quickly into the alley and watched. In a moment the woman with the black patch over her eye came out and stood looking uncertainly up and down the street. It was a grim place for a woman to be alone, no matter how fallen. She shuddered, then walked steadily down the middle of the alley, keeping as far from the buildings on each side as possible.

Tano watched for a time to see if the stranger followed, then silently glided after her, moving from shadow to shadow. He did not see two figures rise from the gloom and follow him in turn.

CHAPTER XVI

"Pst!" The sound was hardly audible to the man who crouched behind the boulder looking down upon Como from the hill. Immediately he was alert, watchful. He followed the white line of the road with his eyes. There was nothing to be seen, but even as he looked a little barefooted figure appeared from behind a clump of trees and walked toward him. The clouds overhead were gathering in great masses and settling over the mountains, throwing heavy shadows on lake and fields. He could hear a man stumbling through the underbrush; presently he saw him break through the tangle and lie down in the long grass beside the road. They exchanged glances, but said nothing. There was no great danger in their undertaking; the only risk was the chance of being seen by some passer-by.

Rosa walked on. The berries were ripening along the road and she stopped occasionally and, picking a few, thrust them between her lips, already stained purple. They were very sweet and delicious. Thinking the signora might like a few, she took off her hat, lined the crown with green leaves and began picking the berries in earnest. She was very conscientious about it and did not eat a single one until the hat was full. Then she placed it carefully between two stones in the shade and satisfied herself.

Rosa could hear the water trickling pleasantly in a flowing stream a few steps from the road. She glanced at the sun; it would be an hour before sunset. She parted the bushes and, crouching low, she scrambled through the wood. It was delightfully cool and shady. She kneeled beside the stream and drank a

little, then walking along beside the brook a few yards she came to a little pool. She sat down on a fallen tree and dangled her toes in the cold water. She wished *padre* were home, and Pietro; they must have a picnic here some time. The thought of *padre* reminded her of the signora. She went back through the bushes, took her berries and walked on. As she reached the brow of the hill two men suddenly stood before her. She was startled and dropped her hat; the berries spilled about her in the dust and rolled into the long grass.

"Oh! you have made me drop my berries," she said reproachfully, and stooped to pick them up.

"Never mind them," one said roughly.

Rosa looked up at him from her knees.

"I do mind them. They are for the signora; she is very fond of them, but I had better pick fresh ones," she said ruefully, glancing at her dusty fingers.

The man who had first spoken took her by the wrist. "Come," he said. "You must go with us."

"Go with you? Where?" she said, frightened. She looked from one to the other. "Oh," she said, "you are the gypsies that passed last night before the storm."

She looked at the younger one; he smiled back at her, showing his white teeth.

"Do not be afraid, little one," he said kindly. "We will not hurt you; but you must hurry, and you must be very quiet."

"If you say one word we will gag you," said the other roughly.

Rosa started and stepped away from him.

"Don't try that, either, or we will tie you, too."

The younger man said something rapidly which she could not understand. He seemed very angry, she thought. Then he turned to her and said: "Don't be frightened, *mia cara;* you are too pretty to cry.

It is necessary that you go with us, that is all. You must be quiet and not make a noise, or I will wash my hands of you and give you to Gian, here, who is an ogre."

Gian glared at her.

Her eyes were full of tears. "But the signora," she whispered; "she will grieve if I do not come home, and Cyrano." She choked.

"The signora will know in good time," the young man said.

"Come on, Paolo," said Gian. "You will have us both caught."

"But, *parde?*" Rosa sobbed.

"You will see him soon enough."

"Am I going to him?" she said eagerly. "Why didn't you say so at first?" She put her hand trustfully in Paolo's and walked on beside him for a little; then Gian led a horse and covered wagon from the woods, where it had been concealed.

"Get in," he said. Rosa climbed in and Paolo took his seat beside her; the flaps dropped behind them. It was quite dark and Rosa was frightened, but she tried hard to be brave. She could catch an occasional glimpse of the road as the cart jolted along. As they passed the cottage she could see the signora at the gate, shading her eyes and looking down the road toward Como. Cyrano ran up and down inside the fence barking furiously. She started to rise and call to them; a strong hand closed over her mouth and held her motionless.

"You must not do that, little one," he said again; "that is forbidden; but if you are a good girl you will come to no harm. You are just going for a lark, picnicing with the gypsies." He released her. The cart jolted terribly and she had all she could do to keep her seat, holding on with both hands.

"But I don't want to."

"Why, that is strange," he said playfully. "You wished to last night."

Rosa's lips parted in astonishment. "How did you know?" she asked.

"Ah, that is my secret; we know much, we men of the road." He laughed.

Rosa was impressed and a little startled. How could he know what was in her mind? She decided to be very good and quiet. She was silent, watching the light fade from the sky and the woods grow darker and darker; she could hear the horse pounding over a wooden bridge or pulling his feet from the clinging mud; occasionally the driver mumbled to him, or cracked his whip. There was no bell on the horse's collar, and she wondered why. All the horses she had ever seen wore bells which jingled pleasantly. After a time she began to grow very hungry and a little faint. Just as a big lump rose in her throat, and the tears started to her eyes in forlorn self-pity, Paolo called to the driver to halt. The cart bumped to the side of the road and stopped. A lamp was lighted and placed on the ground. Then Paolo took a loaf of bread, some cheese and a can of milk from the cart. He cut the bread and cheese with a sharp knife which he carried in his pocket, into chunks. He gave Rosa some; she tried to eat it and succeeded in swallowing a little, but she drank all her milk and felt greatly refreshed.

The men ate silently, tearing off great pieces, which they washed down with milk. Rosa thought they looked very fierce, the lantern shining on their dark faces and wild eyes.

At last they had finished. Carefully securing the remnants of the meal, they climbed into the wagon again. As they were about to start Paolo called out to Gian to wait. He walked off into the forest where they could hear him plunging around with a great crackling of dry wood and rustling of leaves. In a

few minutes he returned with his arms full of clean branches of hemlock and pine. Throwing them into the cart he spread them nicely over the floor with the ends out so that they formed a comfortable nest. He directed Rosa to lie down on this, which she did. He placed a bag under her head for a pillow, and threw his greatcoat over her, saying, "There, little one, I have slept in many worse places," and went and joined Gian on the seat in front.

"Thank you!" Rosa called after him, but he did not reply. She could not be sure that he heard. This worried her for a little while, as she did not wish them to think her ungrateful, but her mind soon turned to thoughts of home. What would the signora think when she did not get home to Pranzo, and it grew dark, and still she did not come? She wondered if the signora would remember to feed Cyrano and how she would get along with no one to help dry the dishes. She thought of her little cot close to the signora's big bed; it would be rather lonesome. She was sure they would all miss her, and she felt very helpless. She was afraid, of course, but her thoughts were all for the dear ones who would be worried by her absence. She wondered if she could slip out of the back of the wagon and escape; surely they had not come so very far—the horse had walked all the way. Holding her breath she struggled to her knees and crawled toward the flap; it was unfastened and swinging gently in the wind; she reached out a hand to open it, steadying herself with the other against the side of the swaying cart.

"Go back to sleep, Rosa."

The voice sounded very big and near; her heart almost stopped. She groped her way back to the boughs and crouched down amongst them. What manner of men were these that read her thoughts, that even knew her name without being told? The silence of the

forest, the darkness, frightened her and she began to cry quietly to herself.

Paolo raised a corner of the hood in front. "Rosa," he said, "I made you that little bed and left you alone so that you could be comfortable."

"Yes." The voice was very meek and pitiful.

"I do not want to think you ungrateful."

"I am not," she sobbed. "I said thank you for the boughs—you—you didn't hear."

"Yes, I heard," he continued. "If you are grateful, promise me that you will not attempt to run away again."

"I promise," she whispered.

"That's a good girl, and now go to sleep." The little triangle of light was shut out and she was left alone again.

"It made her feel very little to hear that big voice when she could not see the speaker, but his tones were kind, and she felt comforted. She clasped her little hands and prayed. "And dear God," she continued, after her usual prayers were said, "bless *padre* and *cara piccola madre,* who is in heaven, and Pietro and Cousin Barodi and Cyrano—and—and" she hesitated —"and Paolo."

She was very tired, her hands unclasped and fell beside her, snuggling a little closer in the sweet smelling pine; she fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER XVII.

The signora finished her duties about the little cottage and stood at the kitchen door smiling at the puppy who had been under her feet all the afternoon. He was a great nuisance, but he had a way with him that disarmed all anger. She had never expected to like a dog, and she was surprised when she realized how the little devil had wormed a way into her heart. She would be very lonely without him, she thought.

He watched her, turning his head from side to side, as she shelled corn from the cob into a tin dish for the chickens; she tossed him a kernel now and then, and he made more fuss over it than he would have made over a beef bone. He took it in his mouth, then spat it out and investigated it carefully, turning it over and sniffing it on both sides; then he cracked it with his back teeth and chewed it into a powder. A small piece stuck between his teeth. He tried to work it out by rubbing the side of his head on the floor and pawing at it. This proving ineffectual, he submitted to the signora's picking it out for him, but he insisted on seeing it after it was removed. The signora laughed, and cuffed his ears gently.

Cyrano watched the feeding of the chickens with great interest, dancing around and barking joyously. They walked back to the kitchen together. There was nothing else to do. The sun was getting low and it was time for Rosa to come home.

"Come, puppy, go find Rosa," the signora said, clapping her hands. The dog darted off down the path, and she followed more leisurely.

As she reached the gate, a covered wagon was passing; a man sat crouched on the seat with his hat pulled

over his eyes. She did not notice it particularly; she leaned on the gate and, shading her eyes, looked toward Como, while the dog ran up and down inside the fence barking and whining. She called to him to be quiet, and when he continued to bark long after the cart had disappeared she broke a stick and shook it at him; he sat down and looked at her pleadingly, his mouth wide open and his tongue lolling in excitement.

"What ails the brute?" she wondered.

The sun sank, lighting the dark clouds overhanging the mountains into long red streamers and painting the lace-like ones overhead a delicate pink; the evening odors began to issue from the woods. It was rather lonesome, and she wished Rosa would hurry.

The dusk deepened and still the child did not come. The signora grew anxious. She walked back to the cottage and got her shawl; then she hastened back to the gate. It was quite dark; she could barely see the turn in the road. She opened the gate carefully, shoved the puppy back into the yard and walked towards Como. Could anything have befallen her? Surely the child could not have met with an accident. Everyone knew her in the town, and would have sent word at once. She raised her hand to her heart; it was fluttering wildly, and Miguel, poor Miguel who had suffered so much would never forgive her if anything had happened.

"Dio mio! Dio mio!" she mumbled over and over again. She reached the crest of the hill, and stood for a moment, looking wildly about. "Rosa, Rosa!" she called, "where are you, *carissima?"* There was no answer save the echo, once, twice and then a little trill as though some one laughed. The signora shuddered. There was nothing to do; she must go to Como and get help. She went down the hill, how—she never could remember. The ground slipped under her feet; she stumbled and ran and walked—once she fell—on

towards the little city that lay so peacefully beside the tranquil lake, in the pretty valley that narrowed near the mountains and disappeared mysteriously between them.

The moon hung over the lake, reflecting a long shimmering arm of light on the surface; the red-roofed houses looked very near in the half light. She raised her eyes to heaven, her lips moving. It looked very far away and the stars were dim.

When she reached the city gate she rushed on, keeping to the centre of the streets; her slippers covered with mud, clattered on the cobbles, her shawl and a long lock of hair streamed behind her. People strolling in the cool of the evening stopped and watched her pass; some laughed, but others with more discernment looked at her with sympathy. A small boy started to trot beside her, imitating her queer gait; others joined him. When she reached the Piazza Cavour there were quite a few jogging on behind. As she turned the corner, the crowds at the cafés rose, laughing, and cheered her as the winner of the Marathon. The signora, heedless of everything save her one great need, kept on to the little shop in the Galleria of the Piazza del Duomo.

"Rosa!" she gasped. "Rosa, is she here?"

The old woman, *Nonna,* rushed to her. What is it, signora? *Dio mio,* what is it? No, the little one is not here," she added as she met the appeal of the burning eyes.

"*Dio* pity me"; the signora gasped and fell back in her chair; she did not faint, but the unaccustomed strain had been very great. She closed her eyes and choked, trying to catch her breath. The old woman poured a little brandy in her open mouth. The color came back to the pale cheeks, her eyes opened. The old woman turned away and made the sign of the cross; they were so beseeching, so full of agony. She

tried to speak. "Water," she gasped. They held a glass of water to her lips and she drank eagerly.

"What shall I do? What can I do?" She struggled to her feet. "I must go home, perhaps I passed her on the road; perhaps she went another way—perhaps—" Oh, but nothing was sure! She would go.

The old woman restrained her gently; she would harness the old horse that delivered the vegetables and drive the signora home. The signora would fall by the road if she attempted to walk. As the *cara* Rosa had often said, "it takes longer to go up the hill than it does to come down." At the mention of the child the signora broke down, the tears rose to her eyes and streamed down her cheeks.

The news spread through the crowd outside the shop and all was interest and sympathy for the poor woman sobbing within. Many of them knew Rosa by sight; some had spoken to her, she was so sweet, so pretty. When the horse was led to the door, blinking and stumbling, many volunteered to go with the signora. A *guardia* took charge and selected two men to go with him. It was arranged that if the child were not found at the cottage a fire should be kindled on the hill, then searching parties might be organized.

The tired horse moved on unwillingly. The crowd watched the signora silently; one or two spoke a word of encouragement and hope which she apparently did not hear. Her eyes were on the mountain, vainly seeking some sign of the lost one. The *guardia* led the horse. The signora sat on the one seat, and the two men walked, one on each side; the crowd followed silently at a little distance.

Long before they reached the cottage they knew that Rosa had not come home; they could hear the dog barking and crying piteously. The signora seemed to shrink into herself; the men did not dare to raise their eyes to her. They stopped before the little

gate and helped her from the wagon; she tottered and would have fallen had not they supported her. They opened the gate. Cyrano darted out between the legs of the constable and rushed off down the road away from Como. They called to him to come back, but did not think much of the incident—a dog more or less did not matter. They helped the signora into the cottage and placed her on the couch in the little living room; the constable drove back toward the city, one man went with him as far as the brow of the hill, where he kindled a fire. The other, a doctor, stayed with the signora, who seemed to be in a coma.

Many little groups lingered in the piazzas, along the quay and on the corners where the face of the hill on which Rosa lived could be seen. They talked quietly and in whispers; some consulted their watches at frequent intervals. They had estimated the time required to reach the cottage and kindle the fire. It was nearly up, but then the horse was old and tired, perhaps it would take a little longer. The cafés were deserted, and were turning out some of their lights.

A murmur ran through the crowd. There had been a faint glimmer on the hill as though of fire. Suddenly it blazed up brightly; they watched it spellbound and silent for a time, the smoke rising straight above the blaze and flattening in a cloud above the trees.

The moon made its way across the heavens and disappeared behind the trees to the west. The eastern sky brightened and flushed a rosy pink, the birds woke and began their chirping in the fresh morning, but still a woman kneeled at the open window and watched the fluttering lights of the searchers fade in the dawning day.

CHAPTER XVIII.

For a time Rosa lay quietly on her bed of boughs, staring into the dark. The wagon no longer jolted over the rough roads. She heard voices. Then she realized where she was. For a moment, on waking, she thought it had been a dream. The tears started to her eyes again, but she resolutely tightened her lips and clenched her hands; crying would not help.

Paolo threw back the flap of the cart. "Rosa," he called gently, "are you awake? We have arrived." She scrambled from the cart and stood shivering in the chill morning air.

"Arrived?" she asked, bewildered.

She stood on a grassy slope surrounded by trees. She recognized the wagons that had passed the cottage. The horses were tethered, one standing; the others were lying on the ground. This attracted her, as she had never seen a horse off his feet before. There were also two small tents that looked as though they had weathered many storms, and before these a heap of ashes in which the coals, still red and warm, showed her where the evening meal had been prepared. Gian unharnessed the horse from the cart, threw a heavy blanket over him and tied him beside the others. Paolo kicked the coals together and threw on a stick of dry wood. In a moment it flamed up and lighted the little camp, fitfully.

A faint glow appeared in the sky over the trees, which gradually widened into day; the forest life stirred and twittered all about them. A cock crowed somewhere in the distance and gave Rosa a sense of civilization.

Paolo called in a loud, cheerful voice, "Ramona! Marionetta! Come, you are lazy; we are returned and almost starved."

"Coming, Paolo," a voice laughed back pleasantly, "have you the little one?"

"Come and see," he replied.

Rosa felt very far away and very helpless, but she was glad those people were kind and fond of each other. Perhaps they would not beat her much if she worked very hard and was very good.

"Where is she?" Rosa was standing with her back to the tents, warming her hands over the crackling blaze. At the sound she turned and faced a young woman with waving black hair and laughing black eyes. She could not help but smile confidently into the pretty face. Ramona placed her hands on the child's shoulders and looked at her for a moment, then stooped and kissed her. "She is a little beauty," she cried, turning to Paolo, "and we will be great friends." A great weight seemed to fall from the child's shoulders. The signora was mistaken about gypsies; she would tell her how nice they really were when she returned home.

In the meantime quite a little group had gathered about the fire. Ramona's mother and Marionetta, who, Rosa surmised, was Gian's wife, and the two children who looked at her with curious dark eyes.

"But she must be famished," said the old woman. "Hurry and get the water." She turned to the boy; he darted off with a pail into the woods. Immediately all was activity; each seemed to have a special duty, and to know it. Rosa went to the brook that bordered the wood with Ramona and washed her face and hands, kneeling beside it. She felt very light-hearted, and a little surprised at the fact when she expected to be so homesick. When they returned to the fire the coffee was boiling and the bacon sizzling in the pan. Ramona sat on a log and nursed her baby. Rosa

watched her and thought it was much nicer than her doll.

The mongrel dog came up and sniffed at her, wagging his tail. She patted his head and thought of Cyrano. He would miss her; she felt sure of that, and for a moment the remembrance of the dear little home overwhelmed her. She was very near to tears, but Ramona called to her and she went and stood before her. The baby cooed and held out her arms. Rosa touched the baby's fingers carefully; they clasped about one of hers. Rosa looked at them critically. They were perfect, even to the little nails. The wonder of creation rose in her heart, but she did not realize it. She just felt warm and happy and wondered if she had ever been as tiny as this little mite.

Nothing had ever tasted quite so good to her as the simple meal. She ate heartily and when she had finished she sat back and sighed. Ramona had been watching her and smiled when their eyes met.

"You should be very glad, *mia cara,* that you came to us and not to some of the other caravans," she said. Rosa did not understand, but she smiled back at her contentedly.

The men lighted their pipes and sat on the steps of the wagons, watching the horses eating their oats and the colt taking its morning meal from the mare. It was very peaceful, Rosa thought. They all seemed satisfied and happy. Ramona crooned softly to the baby, rocking to and fro. The fire gradually died down and the sun rose, throwing a warmth over the valley.

Marionetta gathered the tin dishes, and the bone-handled knives and forks together and began to wash them. Rosa volunteered to help. The tents were folded and packed away in the wagons and the horses were harnessed. With a cheerful "Heigh-ho!" and a cracking of the long whip they jolted over the open fields to

the road, and took up their march toward the east.

Suddenly the dog growled, showing his teeth. He walked a few yards down the road. Rosa turned and watched him with the others. Then slowly another dog, brindle and white, crept toward them. Paolo called the mongrel off. The other dog came slowly on, dragging his hind legs wearily. Rosa gave a little sob and ran to him. "Cyrano," she cried, "dear Cyrano!" She lifted him up gently and carried him in her arms back to the wagon. He raised his head, and, looking at her devotedly, licked her chin.

Ramona climbed to the seat in the first wagon and motioned Rosa to a place beside her. The men guided the horses, walking. The children ran about picking flowers or chasing butterflies, but stealing frequent glances at Rosa. They wished she would come and play with them, but Rosa was too deeply concerned about Cyrano.

"Poor dog," said Ramona sympathetically, by way of starting the conversation. Rosa stroked him gently.

"He is tired out, poor dear," she said.

They looked at him silently for a time. He was coated with dry mud and there was a deep cut over his eye in which the blood and dirt had matted.

"He must be very fond of you, Rosa."

"Indeed he is," she replied, hugging him, "he is a dear."

"And to think he followed you all night," said Ramona. "He must have had some pretty hard knocks, judging by his appearance."

"I wish he could tell us about it."

They were climbing a long hill; at the top Paolo stopped the horses to rest. Rosa washed the puppy's face and Ramona gave him some meat which he ate eagerly. Then they arranged a comfortable place for him on the seat between them. He fell asleep with his head in Rosa's hand. Rosa had a great deal to

think about and it was a long time before she noticed the country through which they were traveling. It was very hilly. It seemed to her that they no sooner climbed one hill than they went down it, and up another. The valleys were very fertile and bright with waving crops, forming a patchwork of many shades of green with here and there a field of yellow, or a silver brook reflecting the trees along its banks. Then as they climbed upwards again, there, amongst the vineyards, the purple vines seem to overflow the grey walls, a splash of color. In many places men and women were harvesting, working in long lines of ten or twelve, swinging their broad-bladed scythes in perfect rhythm, all swaying in unison. Then the gentle swish of the falling grain and the sweet smell of the new-mown hay would rise to them. Often they stopped in the shady forests to rest. They would get down from their seats and walk about or lie on the long grass and look up through the interlacing branches to the blue sky and listen to the clear calls of the birds or the wind swaying the leaves. Once Rosa saw a hare scurry across the road with long, frightened bounds. Then again they would pass a shrine and enter a tiny village where farmers lived under the same roof with their cattle. Each village had its dusty piazza and splashing fountain, where cattle drank and women washed their soiled garments; its old cathedral with cracked walls and tall steeple, its rusty bell and open door, beckoning to all who passed to pause and rest and pray awhile in its cool, dark nave. And then another shrine with Christ upon the cross and the stone steps beneath, worn in little hollows by the knees of the devout, and then the open fields again.

CHAPTER XIX.

On the second day following, Rosa was sitting with Ramona on the Bastioni of Bergano, overlooking the plain of Lombardy. They had become great friends and often stole away for a little to visit a cathedral or enjoy some view together. Rosa would have been surprised, had she thought of it at all, at Ramona's diversified knowledge. They had just spent a pleasant half-hour in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore, where Ramona had pointed out the ancient lion portals by Colleoni, and the fresco representing the tree of St. Bonaventura.

"Where do we go next?" Rosa asked.

"I do not know exactly, but we must be in Verona within the next few days. The horse market begins soon, you know," Ramona explained.

The wandering life was even then sowing its seed in Rosa's heart. She was eager for the road, for the pleasant jogging, day after day, for the camps pitched beside clear brooks at night, for the ever changing fields and woods, for dusty roads winding around the base of a mountain, or stretching straight and white as far as the eye could see, for the shade under arched trees, or the warm sunshine beating upon them in the open, for the wild flowers and the wild berries. All these called her, and she eagerly looked forward to the morning when, as the sun showed its crimson rim above the mountains, they would steal through the streets, silent behind closed shutters, and go on, on.

"A *soldi* for your thoughts, *mia cara,*" Ramona laughed.

"I was thinking," said Rosa thoughtfully, "how I

loved the road, the traveling on to new places, new scenes. Ah! if *padre* and the others were only here, how happy we would all be."

"Are you unhappy, then?"

"No, Ramona," she replied, squeezing her hand. "I am very happy, except when I think how anxious they must be. You see, I never knew my mother; she died when I was born, *padre* told me."

"Poor child!" Ramona put her arm about her. Many people turned to steal a second look at the pretty young mother with the sleeping baby cradled in one arm, the other about the shoulders of the beautiful child with the wistful eyes.

"You, Ramona, are more like my mother than any one I have ever known; the signora is good to me and tries to make me happy. I love her dearly, too," she added, afraid lest she would be misunderstood, "but then she does not seem to understand—perhaps it is because she never had a little girl."

Ramona's eyes were very soft, and she held the child a little closer.

"I have my mother's picture," Rosa said in a low voice. "Would you like to see it?"

"Oh, yes," Ramona said, "very much."

Rosa unclasped the chain from her neck and handed Ramona the locket.

Ramona looked at it closely, admiring the delicate tracing of rosemary over its surface.

"For remembrance," she whispered.

"Yes," said Rosa, "how did you know? It is an English flower; my father made the locket."

"It is beautiful!" She opened it and looked at the face within a long time, and then handed it back to Rosa.

"You are very like her, Rosa," she said.

"Am I really?" she asked, greatly pleased.

"Indeed, yes." Rosa sat quietly, smiling happily.

She was glad she looked like the *cara piccola madre.*

They walked down from the Citta alta through the chestnut trees arched over the Strada Vittorio Emanuele. Ramona's mother, whom they all called *madre,* was sitting in front of one of the tents telling a young woman her fortune. The men strolled about, a little bored, looking at the horses and equipment. One of the men looked up and saw them approaching. He nudged the other with his elbow.

"I say," Rosa heard him say, "isn't she ripping?"

"Stunner," assented the other.

Ramona went to her tent and put the baby who had fallen asleep in her crib. Then she came out and stood idly before it, the picture of innocence and reserve. One of the Englishmen sauntered over towards her. The other glanced at her; then looked at the commonplace woman intent upon her fortune. He shrugged his shoulders and resumed his inspection of the live stock.

"Beg pardon," said the first, raising his hat. "I say, does the young lady tell fortunes, too?"

Ramona nodded. "Sometimes," she said, dropping her eyes.

"Would you be so good as to tell mine?" As she seemed to hesitate, he added, "You see I had meant to have mine told by, by—the elderly woman," but it is growing late, you know, and—won't you tell it?" he pleaded.

Ramona smiled a little and agreed. She placed a stool for him and sat down upon another facing him. She held out her hand. "You must cross my palm with silver," she began. "Ah! to be sure," he said, fumbling in his pockets. At last he produced a five-*lire* piece and placed it in her hand. She held his fingers lightly and began.

"Your name is Edward." She spoke in English with a delightful accent. Rosa was surprised, but could not

understand, as she knew but a few words of greeting and farewell.

"Well, that's rather clever of you," he said, somewhat surprised. "Can you tell me the other?"

"It begins with a B and ends with a K; there are three other letters."

He looked at her in amazement. "By Jove!" was all he could say.

"You are traveling for recreation; the young woman in your party is the wife of your friend. She has a sister whom she would like you to marry. You are not very—what would you say—keen, about it."

"Hold on a moment," he stammered, "you take my breath away. Will she marry me?" he asked anxiously.

Ramona smiled. "Not if you are very determined," she laughed. Then she continued, "You are twenty-seven; am I right?"

"Yes—but—"

"You are very wealthy, have no serious occupation, although you think you are greatly concerned with politics. You are very phlegmatic and would be a successful farmer." She paused. He looked a little disappointed at this summing up of his abilities.

"If you wish me to look into the future you must cross my palm with gold." She watched him search in his purse for a ten-*lire* piece, which he did not find; the smallest was a twenty, and he made a mental note never to be caught again without a few of the tens.

He placed this in her hand reluctantly, thinking it was more than four-fifths of a pound. She took his fingers again and leaned over his hand; her hair was very near his face and there was a pleasant sweetness in the air.

"The next few years of your life will be uneventful; you have recently met a woman with whom you would like to flirt, but your better judgment will tell you that

she is much beneath you and you will go away. She is very dark; do you know any such?" She looked at him with big eyes. He did not answer, and she continued, "You would be most happy living a quiet life in the country with such a woman," she spoke more slowly, "but you will seek political advancement and will attain considerable prominence, although you will never become great. When you are thirty-three you will marry a woman of great social position, the following year your uncle will die, and you will become an Earl of the realm."

The Englishman started. "But, I say," he said, "that is impossible; he has two sons living."

"You have such an uncle?" she asked.

"But the sons?"

"They will be killed in Africa."

He looked at her sharply; her eyes were shallow and the contracted pupils seemed veiled, as with a film.

"There, there," he said hastily, "that will do. It's uncanny, you know; deucedly uncanny." He rose and walked toward his friend. They talked together seriously, looking toward Ramona. The woman joined them, and the one whom Ramona had called Edward left the others as they walked toward the road.

"I say," he said, "here's something for the baby, you know. Not that I wish the boys any harm," he muttered, and walked hastily after his friends.

Ramona glanced at the coin in her hand; it was another twenty-*lire* piece. Rosa came and stood beside her. She was superstitious, like all of her race. She looked at Ramona. "Could you tell me what you told him?" she asked timidly.

Ramona looked at her vacantly, then her eyes cleared and she laughed. "It is funny, *mia cara,*" she said, "but I can't remember."

CHAPTER XX.

Midday found the little caravan resting twenty *kilometri* southeast of Bergamo, on a wooded hill overlooking the red-roofed village of Chiari. Well pleased with the morning's march, Paolo had decided on a long halt in the cool forest. They would not resume the journey until well on toward evening, when the heat of the day had passed.

It was too hot for any physical exertion, and they lay scattered about on the grass, sleeping or daydreaming.

Rosa, finding no one to talk with, built a few castles in Spain for herself and peopled them with her loved ones. She saw a rose-covered cottage overlooking a sunny lake surrounded by mountains. Her father was sitting before a long table covered with golden nuggets, one of which he would take from time to time and fashion into a beautiful locket with rosemary twining gracefully over it, or a chain of delicate lace-like pattern and many other trinkets with primroses and peonies, vines and creepers in graceful wreaths. Then a little girl would run to him, and throwing her arms about his neck, kiss him. He would show her all of the delicate baubles and then they would talk and laugh and the child would go out feeling warm and happy and good.

Next to the work room was a huge blue and white kitchen with shining copper pans and pots, hung upon the walls, and many lace-capped maids rushing about and the signora, a big apron covering her ample front and a round white cap on her head, giving orders which she enforced with a huge yellow wooden spoon.

On the velvet lawn, bordered by beautiful gardens aglow with white and red, and pink and yellow blossoms, a little caravan always waited, the black horses champing their bits and tossing their heads, eager to be off. There Rosa always found Ramona and Paolo and many gay, laughing children in bright costumes with gold rings in their ears, and Cyrano capering about and barking.

Then she would climb upon the seat and give the word to start. The horses would prance, the children would shout and the dogs would run on ahead, as they moved slowly through the forests and fields, over hills and down valleys, rumbling over wooden bridges, through dingy gates, into wonderful cities, which she had never seen before. Here they would pause and roam about the quiet streets and piazzas, looking at their treasures, entering great white cathedrals rich with wonderful paintings and sculptured marbles, listening to sacred music from the deep-toned organ or exquisite chorals sung by many voices.

Then they would eat *gelato* before the sparkling cafés and go on again to new scenes, strange countries. But there was one quiet room, dainty and sweet, where Rosa would love to go when she was tired or unhappy and throw herself into the arms of a loving woman, who had great deep eyes and curling hair, who would pet her and dry her tears and make her feel quite happy and peaceful again, but somehow she could never quite get in.

Rosa sighed. Ramona looked up quickly. "What is it?" she asked.

"Oh, nothing. I was just thinking."

Ramona understood; the child was homesick. "Let's go for a walk," she said.

They went through the woods, climbing over fallen trees and forcing their way through the bushes, laughing and chattering. When they returned to camp, they

found the horses harnessed and the others ready to start.

That night they reached the highway leading to Verona, and camped within an easy day's journey of Brescia. The next night they pitched their tents on the eastern shore of Lagodi Garda, on a hill sloping gently to a sandy beach. When they could, the children ran down to the water's edge to sail sticks of wood with paper sails. It was great sport, but Rosa soon tired of it and climbed a little higher and sat down beside Ramona, where she could look across the lake, eight or ten miles wide.

A gale blew from the north with great force; overhead were many little wind clouds, silver in the late afternoon sun, with here and there a sheaf of rose-colored mist. Overhanging the cliffs across the lake was a huge bank of purple into which the sun disappeared, lighting the upper edge with an irregular band of fire. Beneath this cloud bank and above the hills were all the glorious colors of the Orient, bright yellows deepening to orange, crimson and gold and pale blue showing through the rifts. Sunshine streamed down upon the waters, forming a narrow glistening base of gold upon which the hills seemed to rest. This slowly grew more intense as the golden sun burst from the lower edge and stretched across the tumbling waters, white, flaked with spume, to the beach, where it painted the wet sands gold, then violet, then purple as it disappeared again into the dark mass. A fishing sloop, tiny in this immensity, crossed the golden path under mainsail and lowered jib, scudding before the north wind and disappeared behind a broken bank crowned with waving grasses of yellow and green and gray.

When the sun finally disappeared for the last time, they realized that they were cold and walked briskly to camp where they found a crackling fire of drift-

wood. That night they sat about it longer than usual, listening to Paolo and Gian exchanging stories of the road.

When at length Rosa and the children had gone to bed, Ramona sat close beside Paolo and told him of her experience with the Englishman, "And the queerest part, Paolo, was the fact that I remember very little of what I told him after he crossed my hand with gold. At first, of course, I told him his name. I had seen that on the register of the Reale Italia. It was quite simple. Then I told him the usual things as they appeared in his face, but suddenly a mist covered my eyes and I told him many things, no one of which I can remember."

Paolo was silent.

Ramona thought quietly for a while. "It is the second sight, Paolo?" she whispered.

"I think so, *mia cara,*" he said, "but you must try again. Perhaps one day you will be a queen of Romany."

Ramona could not sleep that night. If it were the true gift it meant comparative riches and a high position amongst the tribes. Many pretended to possess it, but more often than not it was mere acting, supplemented by a wonderful power of mind-reading which all the gypsies possessed to a more or less marked degree; but the real power, the ability to forecast the future accurately, was rare indeed.

CHAPTER XXI.

A tall, swarthy gypsy, wearing a gay bandanna tight over his skull and low over his glittering, avaricious eyes, bowed. "It shall be as the signore desires. *Addio.*"

Lorenzo rubbed his hands and walked to the bar.

"Let us be gay, She-wolf, serve the mongrels with what they will."

"Something has pleased you, Hunchback," she grinned.

"Why do you think that?"

"Your purse strings are loose; that means that you are glad." She shuddered. "Some poor devil must pay. I am glad it is not I."

He laughed harshly. "Is even the She-wolf afraid of the poor Hunchback?" he asked. "Then, indeed, am I great."

"You are great, indeed," she mumbled, "the greatest villain in the provinces."

"What did you say?" he asked suspiciously.

"That you were a great man, the greatest in the provinces."

The woman busied herself with the bottles, turning her back; she was envious of his evident satisfaction. Often he had reached beneath her thick hide to the quick where her dulled nerves writhed beneath the poisoned darts of his sarcasm. Her hand closed about the neck of a heavy bottle; her fingers itched to strike his grinning death's head of a face, but no, there were other ways. Perhaps her turn would come; the road they traveled had its quagmires, perhaps, some day, who could tell? She served the eager hangers-on

meagrely, and met their complaints with staring eyes and protruding chin. "She-wolf, indeed!" She was proud of her nickname. Many feared her, but this cripple—there was no fear in his shifty eyes—only disgust and pity. *Dio mio!* did one dare to pity her? She would show him; her chance would come. She twisted a dirty cloth with which she had been wiping the bar until her strong hands were knotted and purple.

"What bothers you?" he asked. "Am I not liberal enough? Did I not tell you I wished to be gay and you turn back and pull a long face."

"I was thinking—"

"Stop it. Thought is meant for fools who have a past upon which they can look; for you and me there is the present, only the present." He struck his fist on the bar.

"Do something," he said wildly, "stir them up, give them music, make them sing, dance, anything, everything; we must not think." He clutched her wrist. "For a *soldo* I would make you dance the *ballo furioso.*" He glared into her mottled face. She drew back a little.

"You're mad!" she said.

He threw her hand upon the bar. "Perhaps," he said, "perhaps." She looked at him closely; then called to a pitiful wreck huddled over one of the distant tables, and whispered to him. He slouched off and disappeared through the street door. It had once been the common gossip that he was her husband; now, broken by drugs and liquor, a half-witted, chattering servant, he cleaned the place and ran errands for shelter.

Lorenzo fingered a bottle of brandy; then, pouring a long drink, he swallowed it raw. *"Dio,"* he said, "I shall go mad unless this intolerable quiet is broken." He walked up and down the length of the room, clasping and twisting his fingers behind his back.

"Your clock has stopped," he called sharply. "Wind it!"

"Mad," muttered the She-wolf, crossing herself involuntarily. At last the musicians arrived—a red-nosed man with the influenza and fishy eyes, who played the guitar mechanically; and a pale, anaemic, frightened looking woman, who picked uncertainly on the mandolin, rarely finishing one selection in its entirety, but slipping off into something else. They took their places apologetically and tuned their instruments. Lorenzo watched them, his lips drawn in sarcastic lines.

"That's your music?" He jerked a contemptuous thumb toward the couple.

"Don't you like it?" the She-wolf asked bitterly.

"I do not," he said decidedly.

She glared at him, an angry retort on her lips: "It's all you'll get," she compromised.

Lorenzo felt the change in her manner; there was something crafty and subtle in her attitude that warned him that this was not the coarse woman of the night before with no thought of him, save what she could get over the bar, and from the little room above which one reached through the dingy door at the end of the hall. He shrugged his shoulders, realizing that he had made a powerful enemy; it was a mistake.

Tano entered and walked slowly between the tables to the furthest corner and sat down. Lorenzo looked at him in surprise; he had passed him by without a word, without a look. Could he have failed? He went to him, leaning with his clenched fists on the table. "Well?"

Tano raised a haggard face and looked at him with dull eyes.

"Well?" Lorenzo asked again.

"Oh, it's all right," he said, turning away. "They're gone."

"Are they destroyed—totally?" he asked.

"Yes, they're gone," he repeated.

Lorenzo looked at him curiously. "What's the matter? You look as though you'd seen a ghost!"

Tano started and moved uneasily, glancing about timidly with wild eyes. "Oh, *Dio mio,* no, not that," he pleaded.

The Hunchback shook him roughly. "What the devil ails you?" Here he slipped the four hundred *lire* into the passive hand. Tano closed his fingers over the notes folded in a small square, and, without looking at them, slipped them into his pocket.

"Blood money," he whispered; "blood money," and he made the sign of the cross.

Lorenzo went to the bar and brought back two glasses of brandy. Tano sat motionless, staring at the table.

"Here, he said, not unkindly, "drink this and you'll feel better."

The boy took the glass, obediently, drank a little and put it back on the table, half empty.

"Take it all," the Hunchback admonished.

Tano swallowed the remainder. A little color came back to his cheeks; he looked about the hall. "What's that infernal racket?" he asked.

The players were pounding out *"Funiculi, funiculà"* in barbarous discord, while those who were not bawling the words were stamping their feet or pounding with their mugs upon the tables.

"Oh, that? That's nothing," Lorenzo grinned. "I'm giving a party, that's all."

"A party, *Dio mio!"* He looked at the Hunchback, then, rising slowly, he raised his hand and pointed a finger at him: "Curse you!" he said in a quiet voice, "May God curse you for a lying sneak!"

Lorenzo stood and faced him, his eyes terrible with anxiety, "What do you mean?" he whispered.

"You told me you would have everyone out of those houses when the time came, you swore it, didn't you?"

"Yes," he admitted.

"You lied."

Lorenzo clutched the edge of the table and his eyes narrowed. "Don't say that again," he said, "if you value your life."

"I repeat it," Tano said calmly, "you lied."

The Hunchback made as if to spring at him for a moment; then, thinking better of it, slipped into a chair and drummed with his fingers on the board.

"Was there anyone?" he asked.

"Yes, a mother and her child."

"How did it happen?"

"That's for you to answer. I kept my agreement, but you failed in yours." He sat down heavily. "When I entered the first house I found everything I needed, shavings and dry wood in abundance, the accumulation of years; it was so in each house. Promptly at seven-forty-five I lighted my fuses, timed for fifteen minutes, and hurried from the neighborhood. I stopped in two or three places where I was known, some distance from the Via Pinamonte. I bought several drinks for acquaintances, but something seemed to keep urging me to go back. 'Back!' It kept saying over and over in my brain, 'go back and see your work!' As I came out of the last place I heard the engines coming. I stood at the curb and watched them go by, then followed in the crowd. I could not help but go, something dragged me irresistibly; I had no will in the matter." He stopped.

Lorenzo got him another drink. "Go on," he said.

"When I reached the scene, not only the houses, but the adjoining buildings were afire. A woman stood on the ledge of the top story, the flames licked the win-

dow frame. She held something in a shawl; she looked calmly around, then down at the street below, black with a curious crowd huddled and silent like sheep. Then she raised her eyes. It flashed upon me what she meant to do. 'Wait,' I screamed, 'don't jump,' but even as I rushed for the building she jumped and—and—"

Tano dropped his head to his arms. *"Dio mio! Dio mio!"* he moaned.

The crowd sang on, dancing awkwardly with much jesting at the expense of the poor musicians. Tano stopped his ears with his fingers for a moment, then, raising his head, he looked at Lorenzo with dry eyes.

"But that is not all," he said. "There was a child, a girl, not more than five, who ran to the crushed thing on the pavement and cried piteously, and threw herself upon it. They had to tear her away from that which an hour before had been a living human heart with its hopes and anxieties, now a broken, ghastly thing, lying in a pool of blood." He drew his hand across his eyes. "And you, Hunchback, did this, you murdered them."

"I?" Lorenzo asked, astonished, "I did it?"

"Yes, you placed the torch in my hand. I refuse the blame, and cast it back upon you; you killed them, Hunchback."

Lorenzo crouched forward. Tano leaned over him.

"Yes, you murdered them, do you hear, you, you—shoulder your crime and go and dance with the others."

He fell back in his chair exhausted.

"Oh, God! let me forget," he moaned, "please let me forget."

He sat huddled and motionless. Lorenzo touched him.

"Let me alone," he said, "I want to think."

"You dare not think; come with me and forget."

Tano watched the Hunchback walk toward the dingy door at the end of the room, then he followed him.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Verona!" Paolo cried, pointing ahead where the broken walls with grass growing in the chinks appeared, dismal and grey, beside the handsome Porta Nuova which, Ramona explained, had been built by Sanmichele. They narrowly avoided a wine cart and squeezed through the congested arches, where a few beggars in brown cloaks and big soft hats pulled low over their eyes, lounged in the sunshine, offering to sell their prayers for a few *centesimi,* and pleading for alms in the name of God, for charity, for love of the Virgin. Paolo jerked his hand in the manner mendicants all over Italy accept as a final "no," and passed on through the Via Vittorio Emanuele to the Via Angeli. Here they turned to the right and made their camp in a vacant place near the horse-market.

Many had arrived before them; shaggy men from the mountains exercised their horses up and down the parade, while others, dealers from the cities, stood in little groups watching and criticising. A number of ladies and gentlemen strolled about observing the action and conformation of certain thoroughbreds. Although the market was not formally open, some sales were made privately, the animals being immediately led away by their new owners.

Rosa and Ramona watched the scene for a time, then walked on to the place pointed out as the Tomba di Giulietta. Pietro had often told her the story of the lovers, and the stone, hollowed like a basin, beneath which Romeo's love lay buried, was very real to her. They lingered some time in the quaint garden adjoining and recalled the pretty romance. Then Rosa dropped a flower amongst the cards of hundreds of

visitors and went on, stealing a last look through the arched canopy at the broken tomb with the wreath of immortelles.

They crossed the Adige by the Ponte Aleardi, and stood leaning upon the parapet of the embankment di Vittoria watching the rapid river turn the dripping wheels of the mills on pontoons anchored in the current, a crazy foot bridge of loose boards with a flimsy rope hand-rail, its only connection with the bank.

While Rosa looked at the medieval buildings across the rushing stream, Ramona told her a little of the history of the city; how her own Pliny of Como had attributed the first foundations of the town to the Rhaethians and Euganeans, hundreds of years before Christ; how Constantine had conquered it, and how Theodoric the Great held his royal courts in the Castle Pietro on the hill; how Charlemagne captured it and how it had been in turn under the rule of Venice, Germany, France and Austria, and had at last been incorporated in the Kingdom of Italy.

"The great statesman, Metternich," she added, "presided over a conference here in 1822, which settled the disputes between Spain and Turkey, and quieted the revolutionary agitations throughout Europe." She spoke of Dante and Petrarch and Shakespeare and the influence Verona had upon their writings; of the cathedrals and palaces, and fortifications and imperishable monuments to the genius of the great architects Sanmichele, Fra Giocondo and Antonio Riccio, whose works they would visit; and of the Roman ruins, the amphitheatre and baths, until Rosa's head buzzed and she was all anxiety to be off and see these wonderful sights for herself.

Although it was growing late, Ramona could not refuse to allow the child a glimpse of at least one of these wonders, so they walked up the Lung Adige to the Palazzo Pompeii. It was closed, but they ad-

mired its exterior and had a magnificent view of the Castello San Pietro, and the pretty hills dotted with villas reflecting the setting sun from the windows, the nearer embankments and the old bridges capped by the gothic belfry of San Fermo.

Rosa walked quietly beside Ramona on the way back. For the first time she realized there were other and greater things than her own little city of Como. They spent the evening walking about through the market, which had sprung up about the horse-fair. It consisted of many little booths set up in rows displaying their varied wares. There were red shawls, white woolens and blue blouses, crockery, pots and cutlery, vegetables, fruits and nuts, meats and fish, cattle, poultry and squealing pigs. The scene was gay with color. Artillerymen from across the river strutted about in their green uniforms with red facings, their scabbards clanking at their heels, stopping to buy a gaudy ribbon for a pretty neck, or a half *kilo* of nuts. Girls in bright colors flitted about like gay little pigeons, their dark eyes dancing under white lace scarfs draped over their dark hair. A traveling carousel ground out weird music as several little tots whirled round and round on the grotesque animals. There were public letter writers sitting behind their tables and transferring the whispered words of their clients into written phrases to be sent back to those left at home. Men without caps or coats played bowls with remarkable skill on the uneven ground, while there were many noisy groups, shouting and gesticulating over the national game of *Mora.*

When it grew quite dark they returned to the wagons and talked over the events of the day. Rosa was very tired, but eager to hear anything about the pleasant town, or its history. Before she said good-night, she asked Paolo if he would not tell her just one story before she went to bed.

"Just a little short one," she pleaded.

"Well, what shall it be?" he asked, "a fairy story, a ghost story, or a true story?"

"Oh, a true story," she said eagerly, "something about Verona."

"Well, once upon a time," he said, laughing, "or to be more exact, about the middle of the Sixth Century, Alboin, King of Lombardy, marched his army before Verona and laid siege to the town. For many days they fought desperate battles on the walls and on the plains before them without much success. At last the Lombard king sent a messenger to the city with a flag of truce, or whatever it might have been in those days, and offered to raise the siege if the ruler of Verona would give him his daughter, Rosamunde, in marriage. A haughty refusal was sent back to the besiegers and Alboin vowed he would capture the town and marry the fair Rosamunde by force. At last a breach was made in the walls and the long-haired barbarians rushed in, and after a terrific hand to hand encounter before the Palazzo, put the old king to death and captured the haughty Rosamunde.

"When Alboin entered the palace at the head of his victorious soldiers, Rosamunde tried to kill herself, but he snatched the dagger from her hand and threw it out of an open window. Then, as she still refused to wed him, he ordered the dead ruler beheaded before her eyes. After many days, during which she was closely guarded and treated with great cruelty, he had Rosamunde brought before him and married her forcibly, and at the wedding feast he made her drink his health in wine from her father's skull. The poor girl seemed broken in spirit and completely subdued, and in the course of time she was given greater freedom and allowed to wander at will about the castle, the ruins of which can still be seen upon the hill on which San Pietro now stands. However, Rosamunde's spirit was not broken, but she played her part well and

when she had gained the entire confidence of Alboin who, it would seem, really loved her passionately in his cruel way, she crept to his couch as he lay sleeping and avenged her father and her own wrongs, and freed Verona from the tyrant's rule, all with one well-directed blow with a dagger, which she left in his heart."

The next morning Rosa was all eagerness to be off to town to see the many places, with stories of which her little mind was crowded. Ramona shared her impatience, as it was a pleasure to play cicerone to the child, who seemed so interested in all she heard and saw. They hurried through their morning duties and slipped away as soon as possible. Ramona did not wish to show her too much at once. As Rosa seemed to favor the Piazza dei Signori and the other points of interest in that locality, she carefully avoided the amphitheatre and the Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, and chose their way through the poorer streets, teeming with men and women and children in various degrees of filth. They stumbled into every conceivable kind of refuse gathered around each post and column, like steel shavings round a lodestone. The windows were choked with waving blankets and bulging mattresses, and each little shop emitted its own pungent odor of very warm cheese, or fish, or vegetables, or whatever it might be, and a woman stood at every second doorway or so, peeling onions for the evening *stufatino,* all melting in a riot of evil stench. Rosa held her nose; she did not think it very nice, but it was very picturesque.

The doors and steps were dotted with drowsing humanity—blind and crippled beggars, stablemen, petty tradesmen, loungers, each with his wife and little brood. Irregular houses bulged into the cobbled streets in the most startling fashion, so that broughams and business wagons could scarcely pass through without scraping one or the other of the walls. An unex-

pected *palazzo* would startle her with its ancient ornaments and little statues in niches or under the cornice, the front painted after the Venetian style. It was very queer and quaint and when they reached the Palazza Maffei and turned into the vegetable market, which was the ancient forum in the Roman days, Rosa laughed delightedly; it looked like a brilliant picture or a scene from a play.

The sun streamed brightly upon the stalls covered with striped awning or huge gaudy umbrellas, and heaped with fresh fruits, vegetables or sweet smelling flowers; it was very picturesque, full of rich colors. The columns supporting the gilded lion of San Marco, the Berlina, where the *Scalageri* used to sit in judgment; beneath the canopy where the condemned were exhibited before decapitation, the basin where blasphemers were put, and the fountain cool and restful, crowned with the statue of Verona, the fanciful buildings surrounding it, with their painted friezes of the coronation of the Virgin, of Adam and Eve, of the Madonna and the Saints, each added its quota to the vivid scene and seemed essential to the fantastic whole.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Our holiday is over," said Paolo one morning at breakfast, "we must get back to work."

Rosa looked up from her coffee a little surprised; her whole life had been a long holiday, lived with holiday-makers. Once or twice on the way to Verona, Paolo and Gian had gone off for the day not returning until nightfall tired and hungry, but she did not know that they had been swinging scythes through yellow grain from dawn till dusk to gain a few *lire* to pay for their modest requirements. Ramona and her mother told fortunes occasionally for which she knew they had received money, but Rosa thought little, if at all, of these trivial occurrences. She had never associated the gypsies with any consistent labor.

Nothing further was said, but she noticed that a little red and white tent, which she had never seen before, was placed near the street before the wagons, and two small tables and a few camp chairs scattered about inside. Ramona worked industriously on a bright red dress trimmed with black velvet and jet spangles, while the men cleaned and overhauled velvet suits and various articles.

As they worked, they talked.

"What can she do?" asked Paolo, doubtfully.

"I don't know, but she must do something," Gian answered a little sullenly.

"Well, what?"

"She can go about with us and pass the tambourine."

Paolo was silent; somehow it did not seem right to make the child work. "We receive eighty *lire* a month for her keep," he said, "and it does not cost half that."

"It does not matter," Gian replied, "she must do something."

"Let her take care of the baby when Ramona is busy."

"No, that will not do; she must do something to earn money. I think her pretty ways would bring many an extra *soldo,* and it is getting harder every year to lay up enough for the Winter, with the children and the baby and the girl."

"But I tell you she brings in more now than she costs."

"It is not enough."

Paolo thought for a while, two little wrinkles between his eyes. He looked toward the sleeping tent where she sat with the baby in her lap.

"Rosa!" Paolo called.

"Yes," she answered pleasantly, and came at once and stood before him, holding the child in her arms.

"Rosa," said Paolo, "you know we gypsies all do something, however little, to put by enough to carry us through the long Winter when there is no work on the farms and fuel and food are high. Ramona and her mother tell fortunes at the fairs. Marionetta sells shawls and sweet baskets and beads to the curious and devout who visit the encampments, while we—Gian and I—do what we can. We trade horses, and work in the fields and in the evening we play and sing at the cafés. We thought perhaps you would like to do something, too."

Rosa looked at him curiously, "What could I do Paolo?" she asked. "I am not very clever; I'm sure I could never tell fortunes."

He laughed at her.

"How would you like to go with us and rattle the tambourine and pass it about amongst the crowds in the piazzas and see the lights and the gayety?"

Rosa's cheeks flushed. "Oh! I should like it," she said.

Gian shifted his position and smiled, well satisfied.

"Very well, then," he said. "Run and tell Ramona she must make you a pretty dress just like hers, and you can wear a yellow kerchief on your head or a flower in your hair. You will make a pretty gypsy."

Rosa was delighted with the prospect and worked happily all day over her costume, and when at last it was completed and she stood before them she looked for all the world a Carmen in miniature, her eyes sparkling, her lips smiling, a rose in her dark hair, her gaudy dress switching about her ankles.

They did not go far that evening, but roamed about the neighborhood playing and singing while Rosa thumped and shook her tambourine in time with their voices. It was more in the nature of a rehearsal than a public exhibition, but they accumulated a hat full of coppers and small coins.

Rosa thought it great fun. The next evening they wandered about the side streets, playing before each Tratoria and café. The little hoard of coins grew steadily after each concert and Rosa's fresh young beauty and pretty laughing manner added many an extra *lira* to their gains. At last they passed under the arch and stood by the Café Dante. Many people sat about the iron tables around the fountain sipping pink syrup, or eating cake and ices. The Statue of Dante stood, meditative and alone, in the centre of the piazza, surrounded by the fantastic palaces of the *Scaligeri,* of the *Ragioni,* of the *Consiglio.*

Gian thrummed his guitar and Paolo began to sing a Neapolitan song. It was very pretty and light. The words were warm and colorful and carried a message to each Southern heart. The crowd became silent and listened dreamily.

Then they played a little, Paolo the mandolin, Gian the guitar, while Rosa shook her tambourine with much spirit and pretty grace.

At last the men sang together, a laughing song with two parts and much by-play. The crowd laughed with them and dropped coins liberally into the tambourine as Rosa passed amongst them.

A group of Americans sat at one of the tables watching the scene. As Rosa approached them one of them held a five-*lire* piece between his thumb and finger. "Don't you sing?" he asked.

"Non parlo Inglese," she said, smiling at him.

"Won't you sing for us?" asked a pretty young woman in Italian which sounded very funny to Rosa.

"Yes, I sing a little," she replied, "but—" And she looked doubtfully at Paolo.

"Run and ask your father if you may." The young American dropped the coin into her hand and she ran off.

"Oh, Paolo," she said a little breathlessly, "the American people have asked me to sing. May I?"

"Can you?" he asked tolerantly.

"Oh, yes, a little. I know several songs all the way through. Pietro taught them to me."

"If you like," he said, and together they walked to the table, Gian following. They bowed, smiling, and Rosa explained that she would sing if they still wished it. She whispered to Paolo and Gian, who tuned their instruments. She sang a lullaby full of pretty melody, the words of which were very pure and simple; the clear, flute-like notes floated over the old square.

When the song was finished no one moved for a time; then a tremendous applause broke forth, mingled with many calls of "Bravo!" Rosa stood quietly, her eyes downcast, her cheeks burning, trembling at the audacity of what she had done.

The Americans were completely charmed and begged for "just one more."

Paolo was almost in tears from excitement and pride, while Gian smiled with satisfaction at the thought of the *lire* she would make. "Sing one more," he said coaxingly.

Rosa looked at Paolo, and seeing his pleasure and delight in her song, she sang a ballad about a poor peasant girl who fell in love with a star and wandered about through the fields and woods, always seeking, until, her eyes raised to heaven, she stumbled and fell over a precipice into a deep blue lake and was drowned. The little star can still be seen reflecting brightly on the spot where the waters closed over her.

She refused to sing again and, taking Paolo's hand, tried to lead him through the crowd, which had deserted the tables and stood around them in a wide circle. The American borrowed her tambourine and, dropping a gold piece in it, went about amongst the others. It was well filled when he returned and dumped the contents into Rosa's dress. She looked about her, a little bewildered and tearful.

"Oh, thank you," she said. "Help me, Paolo. I cannot carry it like this."

When Paolo reached to take the money from her skirt the American objected. "It is for you, little girl, every penny of it, to spend as you like. Tell her so, Nora," he added, helplessly staring at their vacant faces.

The young woman explained, and they made a bag of a handkerchief, poured the coins in and handed it to Rosa.

She took it, smiling prettily, and throwing kisses to the Americans, walked on. At the end of the Square there was a tiny shop where there were all sorts of queer-looking vessels, irons, kettles, broken vases, odd-looking pictures and rubbish of all kinds.

As Paolo and Gian stopped to put the green covers on their instruments, Rosa looked over the curious collection. A little picture of the Madonna and Christ attracted her—a pretty patch of color in the dull window. She pointed it out to Paolo.

"Would it be very extravagant if I should buy it?" she asked, slipping her hand into his.

"I think you might afford it," he said seriously enough.

An old man with white hair and a limp approached them. "How much?" Rosa asked, pointing to the picture.

"Was it you I heard singing a little time gone?" he asked, without answering.

"Did you hear me?"

"Yes, my hearing is still good, praise the good God, although I am very old."

Rosa's heart opened to the poor old man; she would pay all he asked, she thought. She felt very rich, indeed, and very happy. "How much is it?" she asked again.

"You may have it," he said.

"Oh, no, no," she said, "that would spoil all the fun; see," and she tapped her handkerchief, "I have lots of money." Gian started forward, but Paolo touched his arm. "Let the child do as she will," he muttered.

"You have already paid me *mia cara,*" he said, "with your song."

"Ah! but you don't see," she argued. "To-night I am very happy, and with the first money I have ever earned I wish to buy something to pay for it myself and always keep it."

The old man smiled. "Well, little one," he said, "it is hard to withstand you." Rosa took the little picture, a tiny portrait of the Madonna and the Saviour. It was very old, and a good copy. Rosa hugged it.

"How much?" she demanded, glancing up at him.

"*Duo lire,*" he muttered, "if you will."

"But look," and she turned it over and pointed to a mark on the back; "twenty *lire,* it says."

"*Pesta!*" said Gian.

The old man laughed. "I shall not lose on it, *mia cara,*" he said. "The price on the back is for the tourists."

CHAPTER XXIV

Many changes had taken place in the little cottage on the hill. Flora, Nonna's daughter, was in charge. The bright pots and pans in which Rosa sometimes made faces were still bright and clean, but the coffee-pot was where the milk jug always sat, and the skillet had superseded the frying-pan in its conspicuous place between two huge stone jars. Flora was a famous housekeeper and, like the signora, she believed that each tin should have its place and occupy it; when the reins of power fell into her capable hands she straightway proceeded to rearrange the tins to her entire satisfaction.

They had found the signora on her knees by the window, watching the gate, her eyes dry and feverish, her lips parched and cracked and her hands clasped over a crucifix as if she had been praying. When they spoke to her she did not answer, and when the doctor touched her shoulder she did not move. They carried her to the bed and placed her upon it, and sent a messenger to Como for the women.

Flora and her mother arrived, drawn by the same old horse that had stumbled up the hill with the signora, and the work of transformation began. They moved Rosa's cot back into her own room, and carried her things, her brush and comb, her little dresses and her doll away, while the signora lay unconscious.

"Where is Miguel?" asked the doctor. "He must be notified at once."

"In Milano," the old woman answered. "The little one told me he left on the morning train with Pietro."

"Where is he stopping?"

"I don't know; Rosa did not know."

"*Dio mio,*" ejaculated the doctor, "how can we reach him?"

"He was to write immediately he arrived; it had been many years since he had been to the city and he thought there might be changes."

"If he wrote last night, the letter might be here by the next post," said the old lady.

"But there is no delivery here, mother," Flora said.

"True, it would be held at the post office. Miguel has a box."

"Then I will get it," said the doctor. He was a fat, little man, who realized the tremendous errors the government was making, and how simple it would be to arrange the policy satisfactorily, if only he or some other wise doctor could be prevailed upon to accept a cabinet position.

"Perhaps the authorities will not let you have it," Flora suggested.

"Ridiculous!" he burst forth.

"I'm not so sure."

He cast her a withering glance and disdained to reply. He did not think much of women, anyway; he had never married.

Flora went back into the sick room and took her place by an open window, where she rocked and sewed quietly until it was time to give the sick woman her medicine. The glass containing the cordial was covered by a playing card, face down, on which the spoon rested. Flora turned it over; it was the three of spades. She shivered, and replaced it with the ten of diamonds.

She rocked quietly, her mind occupied with Rosa's disappearance. Every foot of the woods between Como and the cottage had been searched carefully, and it was certain that the child had not fallen or lost her way; but two possibilities remained—the lake and abduction. Flora did not believe that the child had

been stolen, as her practical mind could not find a motive. It was well known that Miguel had but a very small income, and as far as she knew he had no enemies; in fact, he was little known in Como. She was inclined to believe with the great majority of the villagers that Rosa had fallen into the lake and been drowned. Now and then a report echoed up the hill that made her shudder, but she had the courage to pray that the body might be found—even the worst would be better than the terrible uncertainty.

She did not dare leave the sick room as the signora might awaken at any moment. They did not believe that her mind had given way, but that she was in a kind of coma induced by physical exertion and the shock.

It was time for the signora's medicine again. Flora walked to the bed and looked down upon the sleeping woman. Flora raised the spoon and then she put it down again; sleep would do more for the signora than a pailful of the doctor's medicine, she thought. She touched the signora's hand. It was cool and moist; the fever had passed, but there were faint blue shadows in the hollows beneath her eyes.

Flora sighed and tip-toed back to her chair by the window and prayed over her beads.

An hour passed. She looked toward the bed and was startled to meet the signora's eyes gazing at her intently, a terrible question in their dark depths.

"They did not find her?" she whispered.

Flora went to her and took her hand.

"Not yet," she said, trying to give hope when she felt none.

"Are they still searching?" she insisted.

Flora hesitated. "No," she said quietly.

"They have given up?" she said dully.

"There is always hope." Flora pressed her hand.

"What is that?" she asked, clutching Flora violently,

as the report of a cannon fired over the lake shook the little cottage.

Flora did not answer, but met her agonized glance with cool courage.

"*Dio mio,*" whispered the signora, "they think she is drowned." Flora turned away, but looked quickly back as the signora smiled pitifully.

"No, she is not dead," she said knowingly. "I will swear that she is not. Shouldn't I know? Tell me, Flora," she pleaded, "shouldn't I know? I have loved her so well, and something here," she touched her breast, "tells me she is not dead. When I slept I saw her and she seemed gay and happy, but a long way off."

The nurse turned and made the sign of the cross unnoticed.

"She was so far away in my dreams that I could not make her hear, though we both tried, but she waved her hand and smiled and seemed to be trying to make me understand that she was well and happy and that we must not grieve. Oh, she is not dead, Flora, believe me." She turned away from the light and closed her eyes. Flora pulled the shade and shut out the sun.

"No, please, don't do that," she begged. "It has been dark so long."

"Flora," she said after a little, "does Miguel know? Has he come back?"

"Not yet. Dr. Bairo has gone to the village for a letter; then we will telegraph."

"Poor Miguel! Poor Pietro! I am afraid they will not understand." She referred to her dream evidently.

The doctor returned blowing and puffing; his dignity had been greatly ruffled by the post office officials who had refused to deliver a letter from Milano addressed to the signora into his hands. He pleaded, he explained; he stated it was a matter of life and death;

he represented that he was a doctor and was exercising his professional privilege like a priest. The officials ignored him, but finally consented to send a messenger with the letter to the signora if he would pay the charges, one *lire*. He agreed, and a small boy was requisitioned and promised fifty *centesimi* if he delivered the letter personally into the signora's own hands. With many exchanges of witticisms on the one hand and sarcasms on the other, Bairo returned up the hill, the boy beside him guarding his letter jealously.

"I told you so," Flora laughed.

The doctor bit his lip in vexation and pulled the short hairs of his mustache.

"Pesta!" he muttered and stamped off to the sick woman.

Flora followed. When he had examined the signora's tongue and felt her pulse, Flora shoved him from the house with a telegram addressed to Miguel at the Alberge Cavour, and all before he could write out a prescription on the pad he carried in his hand for the purpose.

When he had gone Flora returned to the signora, who still held Miguel's letter in her hand.

"Why doesn't she come?" the signora asked plaintively.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Where shall we go?" asked Miguel. He was learning to rely more and more on Pietro; he had been so long out of the world that he was willing to take his judgment rather than his own.

"There is a pleasant house I know near the Giardino Publico in the Piazza Cavour," said Pietro.

"It is rather far, isn't it?" asked Miguel, picking up his grip.

Pietro laughed. "Not in the days of electric trains. There's our car now; come on. He ran up the walk before the Stanzion Ferrovie Nord, and darted across the street, Miguel at his heels.

"Whew!" said Pietro, "when in Milano, do as the Milanese do. We are learning city ways very quickly."

Miguel looked out of the window and noted familiar objects or marvelled at the changes that had taken place in a few short years. They passed through the Via Dante to the Piazza Della Duomo, where they changed cars and followed the Via Alessandro Manzoni as far as the Hotel Cavour where they were given a very good room overlooking the gardens.

Collazione finished, they crossed to the park. Miguel was eager to seek Lorenzo at once, but Pietro insisted the best time would be mid-afternoon, advising a wait of an hour or so, to which Miguel finally agreed.

"Nothing is ever gained by too much haste, my friend," said Pietro.

"But much is often lost by too little," Miguel replied.

"True, but in your case, we must use a little discretion. Lorenzo is rich and lives, no doubt, like other rich men of the city. He will go to *collazione* about two and will probably not return to his office until four; that is our time."

Miguel was inclined to be a little dispirited, and Pietro tried to cheer him.

"Come, come," he said. "I once read a quotation from Jeremy Taylor, and as I remember it in part, it is peculiarly adapted to your condition, and is as wholesome as a parable. Jeremy said something like this: 'I have fallen into the hands of thieves; they have left me the sun and the moon, fire and water. Unless I list they have not taken away my merry countenance and my cheerful spirit and good conscience . . . . and he that has so many causes of joy and so great, is very much in love with sorrow and peevishness who loses all these pleasures and chooses to sit down on his little handful of thorns.'"

Miguel smiled a little.

"I have a good deal of respect for Jeremy," Pietro continued, "and his fortitude."

"It is a happy faculty," Miguel ventured.

"It is a faculty we all possess if we would but exercise it. I lose my fortune; I am depressed. *Pesta!* it is nothing. I look forward to the one I am going to make; perhaps it never comes, but what matter? Half of the pleasure is in the anticipation."

"You are cheerful."

"Yes, thank God, I am. I can sit quietly and enumerate my blessings and plan my ploughing for the morrow, even if it does rain to-day."

"Don't you think we can start now?" Miguel asked irrelevantly.

"You do not seem to take much interest in my character as I paint it," Pietro smiled.

"My friend, you understand, I'm sure, and in your

goodness of heart you are trying to give me a little of your courage when you have none too much yourself."

Pietro protested.

"I know. I know it is easy to sit here and moralize. I appreciate the spirit in which you do it, but what I need now is action. You say I am dejected; I am not. While I have been sitting here I have not been brooding on my sorrows which are past, but thinking of what is to come. There is Lorenzo; there is the result of our meeting which I dare not forecast; there is Rosa; all must be considered. To-morrow I may be a fugitive without a country, with a man's blood on my hands. These are serious things, my friend, and are worthy of serious consideration, but I thank you, Pietro, with all my heart. Believe me, I can't be cheerful yet. And now I must go."

"You must do nothing of the kind."

Pietro threw off his mask of assumed cheerfulness and was again the serious-minded, crafty friend of a little time past.

"Sit here and listen to me."

They sat down on a bench shaded by a huge cypress. "What do you mean to do?" Pietro asked.

"I mean to go and find Lorenzo."

"But how?" Do you think you can walk into the offices of the National Fire Insurance Association of Milano, present your card and be admitted to his office, or do you think you can force a way through a score of clerks? Nonsense! You would land in a police cell!"

"Then I must lay in wait for him."

"Another ridiculous idea!"

"But what can I do?"

"You will permit me to call at the office. I will represent myself as a large property holder desirous of insurance. I will get a prospectus. We will see

if his name appears among the directors; we are not even sure of his connection with the company as yet. Then I will express a desire for a personal interview with one of the directors, preferably Lorenzo. I will be shown to his room; I will talk with him and arouse his interest through the size of my prospective business. I will hold off and make an appointment for to-morrow morning; then, you will go with me and we shall see."

It was still early, and they walked to the Café Biffi, where Miguel agreed to wait for Pietro. He took a seat very near the one Lorenzo had occupied a few days before. A small boy and an old woman occasionally approached and offered him postcards. Miguel shook his head absently, deep in his own thoughts. At last they carried a suggestion to him; he would write home. He called for paper, pen and ink, but he found it hard to keep his mind on his letter. He pictured the scene across the Piazza della Duomo and his eyes often sought the corner where Pietro had disappeared through the arcade.

He found he was writing about Lorenzo and his business with him. *"Pesta!"* he exclaimed, and tore the paper into small pieces and started again. When he finished the second letter he read it over, and thought it was not very cheerful; he added a postscript of love for Rosa and sealed it.

It seemed a very long time since Pietro had gone, but it was in reality but a few minutes since he had crossed the square to the insurance building and climbed the one flight to the offices of the company. He was met at the door by an official in uniform, who inquired his business. Upon explaining, Pietro was left to cool his heels for a few minutes, while a boy was sent through the rooms to see who was disengaged and could take care of him. He looked ruefully at his coarse boots and trousers, which hung, in-

nocent of crease. He twisted his soft felt hat, and made a mental vow that the next time he had business in Milano he would buy a checked suit and a red tie, patent leather shoes with points two inches long, a bamboo stick and a rough straw hat with a six-inch brim. Such a costume might command respect; he had seen two young men similarly clad who had arrived after him, passed into the sanctum without a moment's delay.

"Well, sir, what can I do for you?" Pietro looked over his shoulder at a little clerk who gazed at him with a condescending air of importance.

"You can send some one here who can talk insurance to me," he said.

"Ahem! Perhaps I can attend to it," the clerk smiled sarcastically.

"I wish to speak to some one who knows the business."

The clerk was hurt, and bit his lip.

"Well," he said, "perhaps you think I don't know my business."

"I don't think anything about it; I wish to talk to some one who has reached the age of maturity." He looked the clerk over sharply. "Is this a prospectus of the association?" he asked, picking up a small pamphlet from a pile on the table and turning to a list of the directors and officers.

"What might your name be?" he asked, as he ran over the names.

"Gaspar Neisse, sir." He bit his lip again; he had not meant to be so civil.

"I don't see it here."

The clerk flushed.

"Now let's stop this nonsense. I wish to speak to one of your biggest men. My name is Pietro Manzoni. Here is my card. Give it to Signor Lorenzo. I have heard of him. Tell him I wish to speak to

him concerning insurance that will approximate one million *lire*."

The boy's eyes bulged and he bowed politely. Appearances were often deceptive; he would be more careful in the future, he thought.

"I am sorry, sir, but Signor Lorenzo is out of the city; he left last night for France. Pietro was greatly disappointed. Why had they never thought of this as a possibility? However, it would make very little difference in the end.

"Hum!" he said, "that's bad—where has he gone?"

"I do not know; he left no address."

"When will he return?"

"In a week or ten days at the latest. Won't some one else do?"

"No, it can wait. I know Signor Lorenzo very well by reputation." He started for the door.

"If the Signor Manzoni," said the clerk, glancing at the card, "will leave his address, I will notify him immediately Signor Lorenzo returns."

Pietro hesitated, then he said, "Hotel Cavour," and walked out and down the stairs to the street. He hesitated to return to the Café Biffi and tell his friend the news, but Miguel saw him at a distance and rose to meet him. "What is it?" he asked anxiously, frightened by Pietro's expression.

"He has left the city for parts unknown, and will not be back for a week or ten days."

"*Il diavolo*," Miguel said.

"My friend, we could not foresee this; we must be patient and wait. There is no use chasing about France trying to find him; then, too, we want him here in Milano, near his bank account, so we must wait."

They spent that night and the following day renewing old acquaintances and transacting what business they had, and in the afternoon they walked in

silence back to the hotel, delaying a little in the gardens. When they went to the desk for their key the clerk handed Miguel a telegram:

"Come home at once. Dr. Bairo."

He handed it to Pietro. "*Dio mio*," he said, "what can it be?"

CHAPTER XXVI.

The trip from Milano back to Como seemed interminable to both. Racked with fear and uncertainty they counted the minutes and cursed the innumerable delays. They traveled in a *treni misti* composed partly of passenger coaches and partly of goods wagons; it seemed to stop at every shed along the winding rails. They could hear the engine puffing and chugging; the train would jerk forward a little, then stop and slip back again. After an interval of quiet it would start again, gradually get in motion and slowly gather speed, only to slow down and halt again at another station. Then would follow shouts and the crash of heavy freight, and then after a long delay the performance would begin again. Every one was irritable and disgusted. At each station heads would lean from windows and exchange sarcasms with the trainmen. Twice they pulled into sidings. The first time, after a wait of fifteen or twenty minutes an express thundered by and they resumed their journey; the second time nothing happened, and after a delay of more than half an hour, a little red light in the distance changed to white, and they continued their way.

The train was overcrowded. The compartment in which Miguel and Pietro sat was occupied by several others besides themselves, some riding forward and facing the others, who were so near that their knees almost touched. Miguel sat at one window, Pietro opposite, at the other; next him was a little fidgety Frenchman, and beyond a red-faced, red-haired, jovial farmer who had been to the city on a holiday, and smelled evilly of strong drink and the cow shed.

He was very loquacious and tried to be friendly with a lean individual opposite, who had a particularly offensive cough. Everyone glared at him when he emitted a hollow bark that seemed to come from the pit of his stomach. He was the butt for the farmer's coarse wit because he refused to drink from a brown bottle as frequently as it was offered. Between this gentleman and Miguel there was a slovenly woman with a dirty baby, that sniveled when it did not yell, and yelled when it did not snivel. There was a respite when the woman nursed the child, but it was not long.

When they had started, the windows had been open, but they had been closed at the woman's request, so that the air in the compartment was very foul. The long passage running the length of the car was full of a heterogeneous crowd of travelers with tired eyes and disheveled hair who hung wearily to the brass hand rail and bumped against the partitions as the train swung round a curve. Miguel tried to look out into the night, but could see little but the reflected faces of his fellow travelers and an occasional glimpse of a cottage or a white road.

At Saranno there was a long, exasperating wait, as the train stood panting in the shed. The perspiration trickled from Miguel's forehead and ran down his nose. He rose, muttered something to the sloven beside him, and threw open the window, stuck his head out and took a deep breath of the air, heavy with smoke and grease, which, however, seemed sweet after the close compartment.

A boy wheeled a wagon up and down the platform with fruits, pies, cakes and wines, displayed in racks on the sides. The woman shouted to the vendor and thrust a dirty hand over Miguel's shoulder and waved to him excitedly. Miguel sat back in his corner; the boy waited patiently while the woman searched for

her money tied in a dirty handkerchief, which had fallen under the seat. She stood up and placed the baby on the cushion; it howled a little louder and slipped over until its head rested against Miguel's elbow. The Frenchman cursed in French and nursed his injured foot, upon which she had stepped, his upper lip drawn in a snarl of pain. At last the necessary coin was produced. She took a banana and an orange for it, after disputing the price with the boy. Still mumbling, she bit a hole in the orange and began to peel it with her dirty fingers, throwing what skin she did not drop on the floor, at the open window; more often than not she missed the opening, and the sticky rind would fall on Miguel's knee. With commendable patience he picked them up as they fell and started them on their way again. At last the orange fixed to her satisfaction, she took a bite with a sucking sound that reminded the farmer of a horse pulling a hoof from sticky mud. This continued intermittently, varied by the sound of the fruit sloshing in her mouth. She did not seem to have many teeth and the process of chewing on her gums was laborious. Two little streams of juice trickled down the wrinkle on each side of her mouth and soaked into the pale blue bow under her double chin.

The train gave a sudden jolt and stopped. There was considerable shouting and running up and down the platform. The woman began on the banana. Everyone was becoming accustomed to the howls of the brat. The tall gaunt man coughed, this time from his boots. The red-faced farmer spat on the floor, and looked mournfully at the cardboard sign which said *"pei fumatori,"* then at the woman with the two white streaks reaching from her mouth to her chin, where the juice had cleaned the dirt from her face. The little Frenchman swore again, softly, in French.

Miguel hated bananas; the smell of them made him

feel ill. He stuck his head out of the window at the risk of his neck. The country slipped by slowly; the outlook consisted mostly of telegraph poles and fence rails, with here and there a tree standing solitary in a close-cropped meadow. In the distance the hills rose dark and uncompromising, to the clear sky. The cinders stung his cheeks and lodged in his ears, and worked between his collar and his neck, but these inconveniences passed unnoticed; at least he could breathe.

The woman touched him on the shoulder. "Close the window, please," she said, and turned to the baby as though the affair were settled.

Miguel drew in his head and looked at Pietro. They raised their eyebrows which was equivalent to a shrug of the shoulders.

"Oh, leave it open," said the farmer; the Frenchman seconded his request in expressive French, which most of them understood. Miguel and Pietro supplemented these with their pleas; the gaunt individual coughed and dropped his eyes but said nothing, whereupon the farmer kicked him on the shins and asked his opinion. The tall one coughed again and explained that it did not matter; whatever the others preferred would suit him.

The woman turned to Miguel again. "Shut the window," she said.

"Here, you," said the farmer, pointing a blunt finger at her, "you sit here out of the air and let me sit there."

"*Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!*" cried the Frenchman, raising his hands in horror. It would bring the woman next to him. "Perhaps you had better close it," he said to Miguel in an undertone. The woman started to rise. The Frenchman drew his feet up until his knees almost touched his chin, and Miguel pressed the latch and let it fall. The baby looked

over the woman's shoulder at Miguel, his poor faded eyes were dim and washed-out looking, the lids red and raw with many tears, his cheeks swollen and smudged with dirt, and the thin-lipped mouth drooped piteously at the corners on either side of the scant chin. It was an unlovely sight and Miguel's tender heart beat a little faster in sympathy, but he did not dare encourage the child. The poor little thing reached out a grimy hand toward his collar. Miguel moved a little further into his corner. Unable to reach him the baby howled in pure deviltry; the woman cuffed it, and it screamed afresh.

Having finished about half the banana the woman carefully folded the skin over what remained and placed it beside her on the seat next to the gaunt individual. He looked at it dubiously for a moment from the corner of his eye without moving his head, hitched over a little, away from it, then promptly forgot it in a fit of coughing. The baby yelled and kicked by way of variety; the banana fell to the floor and lay with the peel extended like the cup of a lily. In the course of nature the tall individual stepped on it. When he felt the soft mess beneath his foot he turned pale and glanced hastily around, then covertly pushed it from him under the hem of the woman's skirt. Then he sat back and looked innocently at the space above the racks over the farmer's head. The Frenchman, who had watched the little comedy, burst into peals of hysterical laughter and clapped Pietro on the knee repeatedly and mumbled inarticulate French. The farmer and the woman glared at him uncertain as to the cause of his merriment. At last the train limped into Como, and Miguel and Pietro stepped into the fresh morning air with a mutual sigh of relief.

They rushed up the hill and burst into the signora's room.

"Oh, Miguel, thank God you have come," she said, raising her weak hand to him.

"What is it? Where is Rosa?" He scarcely dared whisper the question.

"I do not know; she disappeared the evening of the day you went away." She closed her eyes, unable to meet his gaze.

"How? Where?"

"Between here and Como; she went to the village and did not come back."

"Dio mio! Dio mio!" Miguel dropped his head to his hands.

"They searched the woods and every foot of the country for miles around, then—they dragged the lake and fired cannon." It was torture for the poor woman to explain the details in this quiet way. "She was not found."

The father groaned; Pietro stood at the window, his hands clenched, his jaws set, looking out on the garden where they had spent so many pleasant days. The dew lay on the grass in fairy webs, and glistened in the opening roses like opals. The air smelled of the damp soil. There, by the locust with the trailing bittersweet looped over its branches in graceful festoons, Pietro had told Rosa the story of Romeo and Juliet and of the bad King Richard, of Falstaff, of Villon, of Ivan the Terrible, in plain words, marring not the beauty of the tales by his simple phrasing.

There, just within the gate, she had given him the worsted doily; the homely token of her childish love; there, on the open turf between the trees she had romped with Cyrano.

He turned to the signora. "Where is the dog?" he asked.

She looked at him reprovingly. How could he think of the dog when Rosa was gone, she wondered.

"He ran away the same night," she said shortly.

Pietro nodded. "I thought so."

He placed his hand on Miguel's shoulder.

"Take heart, my friend, she is not dead; we shall find her."

Miguel shuddered at the plain words.

"I had a dream—" the signora began.

"The dog, wiser than we," Pietro interrupted, "followed her; he has found her, not near Como, but at a distance. She has been stolen."

Their eyes met. Miguel did not heed Pietro's next words; he understood.

"When we find Lorenzo we will find Rosa."

CHAPTER XXVII

"Why not? Is there any other place where we could have the freedom from observation we would have there? Your friends and mine have gone to Trouville, Switzerland, the Lakes; in Paris we would be lost."

Lorenzo sat on the divan on which the Contessa reclined.

"It is dreadfully out of season," she objected.

"So much the better."

"When would you wish to go?" Giulia asked.

"To-night, this minute."

"You are impatient," she laughed.

"Man was never more so," he said, leaning over her and looking into her eyes.

She pushed him away firmly. "You must wait."

"You make me wait too long," he said resentfully.

"Is it not better to wait, rather than—never attain?"

"Infinitely, Giulia. When will you go?"

"We must not go together."

"Why not?"

"Is it to be an elopement?"

"Why not?"

"There would be scandal."

"There always will be."

"No," she said, "it will be better if we go separately. You go to-night; I will follow to-morrow. You may go to the Grand, the Ritz, anywhere but the Meurice. I will stop there. Then we can meet as often as we like and still observe the proprieties."

"You wish to come back to him?" he asked sullenly.

"I am indifferent to him and you know it, but I do wish to avoid scandal."

"It shall be as you wish, of course," he said, not without a touch of sarcasm. He was jealous of her consideration of Gildo, and would willingly have arranged the affair openly, bearing his share of the odium for the mere sake of causing pain to another.

"It is settled, then," he said.

There was no feeling of elation in Lorenzo at her surrender. He walked to the window and looked out. He was chilled by her manner and resented her matter-of-fact attitude. They had talked over the ways and means and concluded the bargain.

"It is settled," he muttered. "Bah! the woman is an iceberg." He turned to tell her something of his thoughts, but paused to watch her as she played with a tiny Pomeranian. The lamp, shaded by an elaborate mosaic of many-colored glasses enveloped her in a warmth of light. He noted the moist red lips parted in a tender smile, the eyes languid and drooping under curling lashes, the soft curls at her neck. His anger left him, a wave of passionate desire surged over him, and he went to her and, kneeling, took her hand. The dog growled and snapped at him. She touched his ears and put him down.

"Naughty Toto," she pouted, "go to bed." The little ball of black hair trotted off obediently and climbed into his basket lined with rose silk.

"Giulia," he said, "Giulia."

"That's a dear," she said to the dog as he lay down.

"Giulia," Lorenzo repeated, squeezing her hand.

She looked ruefully at the pink dents left on her smooth fingers by the impress of her rings.

"You hurt me," she said, her eyes brimming with tears.

He kissed the injured fingers tenderly.

"I'm sorry," he whispered.

She looked at his head bent over her hand. The smooth, oily hair, carefully parted front and back

annoyed her; she longed to twine her strong young fingers in it, and pull till he asked for mercy.

When he looked up she was smiling a little reproachfully.

"You do not realize how strong you are," she said.

"I am sorry," he repeated, and added magnanimously, "I would not hurt you for the world."

"You had better not," she thought, but said nothing.

"Sweetheart," he said pleadingly, "do you really wish to go away?"

"What a question!" she laughed. "How shall I answer?" Shall I tell you that I shall be desolated if you do not take me, or shall I say that it is a matter of complete indifference to me?"

"I am afraid the latter would be nearer the truth."

"If you ask foolish questions you must answer them yourself."

Lorenzo bit his lip.

"You are a fraud," he said, trying to force a smile.

"Wait, my friend," she said, leaning toward him. "Perhaps you have not begun to make my acquaintance yet; your opinion may change many times before we leave Paris." She touched his cheek lightly with her fingers.

"I am thirsty," she said, apropos of nothing. "What would you like better than anything else in the world?"

"You," he said.

"You are an overgrown child," she said. "I mean what would you like most to drink."

"Oh, anything you like. You are both food and drink to me."

Giulia laughed. "You are worse than a child," she answered. "You are a sentimental youth."

Lorenzo grinned foolishly. He had reached the age when being called a youth, even in banter, tickled him prodigiously.

"Shall it be champagne?"

"If you like."

Giulia summoned the maid and instructed her what to bring. In a few minutes she returned with sugar and bitters, a cooler packed with cracked ice in which a bottle stood, and two thin glasses.

"Thanks, Sophia. Signor Lorenzo will attend to it."

Lorenzo turned the bottle quickly in the ice, cooling it evenly.

"Hurry," said Giulia, "I am perishing."

He took off the wire, slowly loosened the cork, then filled the glasses; the amber liquid looked very pretty in the soft light, the bubbles rising in little streams and breaking against the sides of the tumblers.

Giula sipped the cool drink thoughtfully.

Lorenzo raised his glass. "A toast," he said, "to sunny days and happy nights and you." He drank a little.

Giulia smiled, but did not touch her glass.

> " 'Come, fill the cup, and in the fire of Spring
> Your Winter garment of repentance fling;
> The bird of time has but a little way
> To flutter—and the bird is on the wing.' "

"Omar Kayyam always makes me a little sad," Giulia sighed.

"I should say his verses are always particularly jovial, and his advice gay," said Lorenzo.

"They are meant to be, no doubt," she assented, "but the repeated reference to repentance and fatality depresses one. He expresses, to me, reckless resignation and a determination to forget that is somewhat pitiful."

"Well, then," Lorenzo laughed, "give me a toast more cheerful."

She thought for a moment. "I am afraid I can't

just now; somehow they will not come as I wish."

"You are blue?"

"A little."

After a moment she added. "May we never have friends who, like shadows keep close to us in the sunlight only to desert us on a cloudy day or in the night!"

"That is less cheerful even than yours in its suggestions. Which one of us cannot recall some fancied friend who has slipped from us in the dark places? To-night the words repeat themselves over and over in my mind until they almost seem prophetic."

Lorenzo laughed uneasily and refilled her glass. "Come," he said, "a plague on all toasts that are not gay. We will pledge each other."

"What time does your train leave?" Giulia asked.

Lorenzo glanced at his watch. "Ah, that reminds me, may I use your phone?"

"Certainly."

First he called up the railway office and engaged a compartment; then he called his house and instructed his valet to pack his things for ten days and be at the *Stazione Ferrovie Nord* fifteen minutes before train time.

"There," he said, hanging up the receiver, "living is simplified more and more every day."

"It is certainly becoming easier for a lazy man," Giulia answered ungraciously.

"And lazy women?" he asked.

"Signor, why will you never allow me to criticise your sex without immediately including mine?"

He laughed.

"Is it because you love your fellowmen so much, or hate women more?"

Lorenzo crossed his knees. "It is because a woman is always in my mind," he answered.

"Pooh!" she exploded, and added to herself, "there is little else in your mind but self."

Lorenzo poured the remainder of the wine into the crystal tumblers.

"I wish we were in Paris," he said musingly, watching her closely. He fancied she blushed ever so little, but he could not be sure. "I hate the thought of the long journey—alone."

"It is the better way."

"It is your way, therefore the best."

"*Merci,*" she said and laughed. "I must polish up my French."

"Paris!" he said reflectively. "The capital of the world with its palaces, its boulevards——"

"And shops," she interrupted.

"To be sure, its shops—but above all its restaurants, its constant laughter and occasional tears. There will be racing at Long Champs and motoring to Fontainebleu, to Versailles. Do you know Ville d'Avray with the little arbors in the garden overlooking the lake?"

"Yes, I remember."

"We will dine there under the arbor and watch the boats dancing in the moonlight."

"You are growing poetical."

"It is an inspiration, but, *sapristi!* I must be off."

She rose and permitted him to hold her to him closely. "*Au revoir, ma chere Giulia,* until we meet in Paris." He kissed her.

"*Au revoir,*" she replied.

When he had gone she sat for a long time and smoked two or three little cigarettes and her thoughts were not very pleasant; the tears stood in her eyes and she sighed occasionally. At last she shrugged her shoulders, turned out the lamps and went to her room. She undressed slowly and went to bed. She sighed again many times before she fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Fog distorted the mouldering buildings near at hand and hid the unwholesome alleys, vile with the decaying stench of steaming vapors. Lorenzo and Tano crouched against the slimy plaster in the mildewed hall of the Silver Heron and listened to the heavy step of a *guardia* as he went his round of inspection, trying a door-handle or peering through a dirty window into an unlikely shop, until the last hollow echo died away in the distance.

"I must go," Lorenzo whispered.

"*Buon Dio!*" Tano sobbed, "I dare not face the day alone."

"Nonsense, what have you to fear?"

"What have I to fear? *Madre di Dio!* I am afraid of the little child that screamed upon her dead mother's breast. I am afraid of the sunlight. I am afraid of myself, my thoughts, my mind, lest I go mad. That pitiful cry beats in my brain; my eyes cannot blot out the horrid sight of that broken frame." He clutched Lorenzo's arm, sinking his nails into the flesh until he shrank with pain.

"Look, look," he muttered, pointing at a dark corner near the stairs. "They are there! The poor, poor mother, her dead baby and the sobbing child." He pressed his hand across his eyes. "Is it not pitiful? Oh! Hunchback, you know little of what you've done."

Lorenzo looked with dilated eyes at the spot where the wretched man pointed, his heart contracted and aching. "*Mille diavoli!*" he muttered through his chattering teeth. "Don't be a fool." He shook himself free and opened the street door. The fog sifted around them in stagnant clouds, damp and clammy,

like breaths from rotting tombs; the common tenements loomed gray and threatening, the roofs lost in the mist.

"Don't leave me," Tano begged, reaching a clutching hand toward him. The Hunchback avoided it and slipped through the door, closing it behind him. Tano fell to the floor overcome by the horror of his fear; he lay staring before him with frightened bulging eyes. The broken wall took the shape of burning buildings. He could see the flames pouring from the doors and windows; a great heat enveloped him, the sweat streamed from his forehead and wet the clothing on his body. Fascinated, he neither heard a faint sound at the head of the stairs nor saw the She-wolf peer over the broken rail and come down to him.

She stood beside him and the fear in his eyes changed to hate. She listened to his broken, mumbled words, and the whole unlovely story was revealed to her. She heard him curse the Hunchback and swear to make him suffer. Her broken lips spread in a grin over her yellow teeth. The way they traveled had its quagmires and ambuscades indeed; her day might prove to be to-morrow.

"Come, come," she said, in as kindly a voice as she could assume. "There's no use giving up like that."

Tano cursed and moved away from the hand on his shoulder. "No, no, it's better you should go. I've had enough of you and your ways; begone!" The She-wolf nodded her head, well pleased. She knew he imagined the Hunchback had returned.

"There, there," she said coaxingly, raising his shoulders with her strong hands. "He has gone. You can get even; I will show you. Come!"

He raised his bloodshot eyes and stared at her. It seemed natural that she should be there. "How?" he asked.

"There are ways enough; we will find the best."

The poor broken boy would be as clay in her hands; his mind, never very strong, had weakened under the strain. She knew his pitiful story; naturally easy-going and careless, wrecked on a woman's selfishness. The same pitiful story told in the papers day after day and not worth repeating.

"Come," and she helped him to his feet. The faint light of dawn sifted through the cracked transom and half lighted the stairs as the woman helped him to a room on the first landing. She gave him a sleeping draught, and when his deep breathing assured her that he slept, she stole quietly to his bed and looked down upon the unconscious frame, big-boned and muscular. She leaned over him and looked at the face, coarsened by dissipation and evil living, the once smooth fair skin blotched and bloated, the yellow pockets beneath the closed eyes, the bloodless lips drawn, even in sleep, with a cynical twist. She opened one of his eyes with a blunt finger tipped with a broken black nail. The pupil of his eye was turned up and sightless.

She had seen the Hunchback give him something which he had thrust in his pocket without a glance; her intuition told her it was money. Her eyes grew narrow and avaricious. She brushed the rusty gray hair from her forehead and holding her breath thrust her hand into his pocket and took out the little square of folded notes; then she dragged a broken chair across the bare floor to the window. The blinds were tightly closed. She opened them a little and let in a narrow shaft of light which fell across the dusty floor and touched the edge of the bed. She looked toward it and listened to the deep, uneven breathing of the drugged man. With trembling fingers she unfolded the notes and counted them. "Four hundred *lire*," she muttered. "He did not count them." She grinned. "He can't be sure what the Hunchback gave him." She folded three of the notes as they had been, the

other she rolled into a tiny ball and placed in the toe of her shoe.

There was a faint stir of life on the street beneath the window. A cart rumbled by on creaking springs. A shrill call and a curse floated up to her; the querulous voice of a child answered saucily. She heard a blow struck and the shrieks of a child. A door slammed and they became less distinct. The She-wolf looked through a crack between the blinds and watching a skulking cripple poking about in the filthy gutters with a long stick with a sharp point; occasionally he stooped and picked up some object which he placed in a bag slung from his shoulders. She carefully fastened the blinds and shuffled across the floor. She paused at the threshold and looked back at Tano.

"You'll sleep like a babe until night." She closed the door behind her.

Tano shifted uneasily from side to side, as though unable to find a comfortable place on the hard bed for his aching body. A mouse ventured from the wainscoting and looked timidly about the bare room. Tano rolled to his back, his arms stretched on either side, his mouth open. The mouse scurried back to its hole, to peep out again with hungry eyes.

He slept through the dull day, tossing and groaning in a torpor, and did not awake until early evening, when he opened his eyes to see the She-wolf standing beside him with a bowl of onion soup and a loaf of coarse bread in her hands. When he had eaten it, sopping the bread in the greasy mess, he felt better and tried to recall the happenings of the past two days.

"What o'clock, She-wolf?" he asked.

"It is nearly five. You slept well," she answered.

He shuddered. "I dreamed," he said.

"No wonder, you sleep flat on your back."

He did not reply for a time. Gradually he pieced together the unhappy consequences of his deed. He

recalled the Hunchback leaving him terrified and alone in the hall; then he remembered nothing until the She-wolf helped him up the stairs to this room.

She watched him covertly. She saw him glance at her suspiciously and then feel in his pocket. The money was safe, he thought. He wondered why he had not been thrown into the street after the manner of his kind. He could not understand why he had been given this room and fed and taken care of. It was useless to thank the woman; he realized she had her own motives, which he would probably learn soon enough.

"I am afraid you are suspected," she said at last.

Tano started. "Suspected of what?"

The She-wolf grinned. "Come, come, now, don't play the innocent with the old woman," she said. "I know."

"You know what? I've done nothing, nothing," he said, twisting his hands and looking wildly about.

"Ho, ho, it's nothing then; oh, well, if you don't care, I don't. I thought I'd warn you." She picked up the empty bowl and plate and walked toward the door.

"Wait," he called. "Why do you think they want me?"

"Oh, it's nothing," she said, opening the door. "A detective has been watching the place all day. I thought it might be about the fire." She saw him shrink.

"What can I do?" he moaned.

She placed the dishes on the floor and came toward him. "That's more like it. If you leave it to me, I can fix it."

"How?"

"Are you willing to trust me?"

The boy was frightened and willing to trust his soul's salvation to the devil. "Yes," he said eagerly. "How?"

"You must give up the Hunchback."

"I have. I hope never to lay eyes on his nasty face again."

"That's not what I mean," she laughed.

"What then? You can't mean to give him up to—to the *guardii?*"

She nodded. "Why not?"

He sat down on the broken chair dejectedly. To give evidence—that was the most despicable thing a man could do. What was it the Hunchback said? "A man usually suspects others of being what he himself is." If he did this he would be an informer, a man without a place to lay his head in peace; the word would be passed from Osterie to Alberge and back again; he would be shunned even by the most depraved thief, the vagabond cheating the gallows from day to day.

"No," he said. "I could not do that."

The She-wolf sneered. "Would he protect you by silence if caught?" she insinuated. "Would he lift a finger to save you from the hulks?" She laughed. "You are a fool; do you know that Rogato died on the tree cursing him for a traitor? Do you know of the girls who have been found floating face down on the Olona whose last breath was spent in cursing him? Do you think the little child whose screams you hear ringing in your ears should be avenged? What manner of man are you to shoulder the blame of this murder for a lying sneak who would cheat you of your ferriage? Bah! you sicken me."

Tano's head sank lower on his shoulders.

"Did he ever pay what he promised?" she went on. "Did he pay you for your work?"

"Yes," he muttered, and reached in his pocket. Absently he unfolded the notes and counted them. Then he looked at the She-wolf pathetically. "Look," he said, "I call you to witness. Count them!"

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"DID HE EVER PAY WHAT HE PROMISED?"—*Page* 164.

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"Three hundred," she said, handing them back jealously.

"Yes, three hundred," he said, rising. "You are right. He has cheated me. He promised me four."

"You see. What did I say? Did I not tell you?"

"Yes," he said calmly, squaring his shoulders and striding up and down the narrow room. He blamed the Hunchback; no suspicion of the She-wolf entered his mind. He had been betrayed, he felt sure of that. Gradually his hatred grew till it became a crying need for vengeance. He would get even, and as the woman said, he had a way ready to his hand. She watched him closely and felt her work well done.

All that night he walked restlessly about the room in the dark waiting for the Hunchback. Occasionally he peered through the blinds, and observed the two dark figures hiding in the shadows across the street. When the lights were turned out and the shutters put up he continued to watch for the cripple, who did not come.

CHAPTER XXIX

Giulia leaned from the balcony of the Café des Ambassadeurs and watched the crowd in the gardens below. The effect was rather startling. The stage at the further end was brilliant with color and sparkling lights. The chorus sang and danced in scanty costumes and finally resolved into a tableaux representing the birth of Venus, while the orchestra sawed and beat and blew with a fine frenzy, the leader waving his arms like a Dutch windmill in a gale. She tried for a time to associate their violent exertions with the stirring music that rose to her, but it was useless, as they were so far away that the time between the motions made by the bass drummer were perceptible a second or more before the sound reached her.

The seats, arranged in long yellow semicircles before the stage, were crowded with black-coated spectators, all with their faces turned away from her creating a peculiar effect as of so many marionettes without expression or identity. Inmmediately beneath, at the tables, where less attention was paid to the performance, there was more semblance of human life; although the faces were not very distinct, she could see the smiles and watch the gestures of the gay crowds and distinguish the different colors of dress.

She glanced at Lorenzo, who was fully occupied with a huge glass in which he twirled a little brandy and inhaled its fumes. With an impatient gesture of disgust she took a peach from a wooden box lined with cotton and began to toy with it.

They had been together in Paris for three days and three nights spent in a feverish search of pleasure. They had renewed their acquaintance with Momart and its famous resorts and found them all wanting.

The boulevards were dirty and bare, some of them torn up for much-needed repairs. Even the Bois looked burned-out and faded. The Parisians had turned over their city to the tourists who flocked, open-mouthed, in every conceivable corner, guide book in one hand, umbrella in the other; the cab horses sweated and stumbled in the heat, goaded continually by the cracking whips, the bells on their collars jingling in sarcastic merriment.

One night they dined at the Café de Paris, driven from the Champs Elysées by a drizzling rain. Giulia had been quite contented there for a little while as Lorenzo had been very considerate and she had ordered everything she liked best, but toward the end of the dinner a man whom she knew slightly in Milano, came in with a French woman. He bowed to her with a grin as much as to say, "If you will not tell my wife, I will not tell your husband." She pretended not to know him and stared over his head coldly, but her evening had been spoiled. After dinner they had a box at the Bouffes Parisienne in the Rue Monsigny. The farce was disgustingly immoral, but Lorenzo had insisted on remaining until it was over despite her protests.

She watched him across the table. He was evidently trying to flirt with some woman behind her. She turned away indifferently. What did it matter? Whatever feeling she had for him was one of loathing and she was tempted to give it all up and return to Milano, but she mentally ran over a letter received that afternoon. "Everything is progressing as we hoped," it ran. "Given a little more time we can accomplish our purpose thoroughly, so that there will not be a stone for him to tie to. Keep him in Paris for at least a week and everything will be well."

"A week—four days more," she shuddered.

"Why don't you say something?" Lorenzo asked

roughly. "You look as though you'd lost your best friend. Cheer up!"

Giulia looked up and tried to force a smile. Duty stood plainly before her and she determined to play her part well as long as she had undertaken it.

"I have a headache," she apologized. "The lights are too bright."

"Nonsense, women are always complaining."

"I'm sorry——"

"That's it," he interrupted, "you're sorry; you immediately try to put me in the wrong—you're sorry for what? Have I been blaming you?"

"I thought——" she commenced, but stopped and sighed. What was the use, she thought, he was determined to put her in the wrong.

"Have you enjoyed the *revue?*"

Giulia hesitated. She knew that he would resent any answer she might make; if she said that she had enjoyed it, he would ask her superciliously what it was about, knowing that she could not tell. If she found fault he would say that she was hard to please; if she admitted she had noticed it hardly at all, he would blame her for being distrait and abstracted.

"I think it is as good as *revues* go," she ventured.

"They are all idiotic."

"We might have enjoyed it more had we seen some of the plays they are burlesqueing."

"I thought you would say that; it simply bears out my theory of all women in general and you in particular. You always want the unattainable. How in the devil's name could we see the plays current during the past Winter in Paris when we have been in Milano?"

"I did not mean——"

"No, you never mean anything, you as a class say things without meaning. That's what I object to——"

"I am sorry——"

"There it goes again—'I'm sorry; I didn't mean.' Were there ever two weaker phrases coined? Have you no control, no mind? Bah!"

"*Garçon,*" he called to the waiter, and ordered more brandy and a cigar.

"I should like a white mint *frappéd.*"

"Why didn't you say so. The waiter's gone now. You should learn to make up your mind more quickly."

Giulia suppressed a laugh with difficulty.

"What are you laughing at?"

"Was I?"

"Yes, you were."

"Well?"

He stared at her with threatening eyes.

"Well?" she repeated, returning his gaze with a smile.

He cursed a little and clapped his hands together sharply. "A white mint *frappé* for madame," he told the waiter who had hurried up.

He left Giulia to her thoughts for a time and looked at the tables about him, crowded with an interesting assortment of diners—at one a family party; at another an old man who was very attentive to a handsome young woman, a boy scarcely out of his teens sitting silently beside them. There were several tables occupied by groups of four, generally two women in very low gowns and a great deal of jewelry, some of it from the Rue de la Paix and the rest from the Rue de Rivoli, and two young men who were very devoted and ordered the most expensive dishes and wines. The women frequently exchanged critical glances with their counterparts at the other tables, and whispered behind their fans to each other.

It was one of these in whom Lorenzo was showing rather an insulting interest. Her curiosity aroused,

Giulia opened a gold vanity case and under the pretext of fixing a stray curl at her neck looked at the table behind her, reflected in the mirror. As she watched, the woman raised her glass and smiled and dropped a folded paper to the floor beside her. Lorenzo excused himself and sauntered toward her. Giulia continued to look in the glass and saw him stoop when he reached the woman's side, pick up something and go on. The color rushed to her cheeks and stained them crimson. While she cared nothing for Lorenzo and tolerated him because of some deep purpose of her own, her vanity was wounded and she felt humiliated lest someone else had watched the performance.

He was gone so long that she began to grow uneasy and fancied all eyes in the place were focused on her and that everyone was talking about her. She half turned her back and, resting her elbow on the rail, looked down at the garden, more to hide her face than from any amusement she might expect to derive from the scene. After a time she saw Lorenzo strolling calmly up and down amongst the tables, ogling the women impertinently and glancing at their escorts with scant courtesy. His gait was not very even. She fancied he staggered ever so little. His face was very red, and he wore his straw hat tipped to a rakish angle. For a moment angry tears burned her eyes and she remained in her seat with difficulty, but then, she smiled a little sadly. What had she expected? She knew Lorenzo's character better probably than anyone else in the world. She had counted on insults and abuse; she would have been surprised had he acted differently.

"It is rather humiliating," she argued with herself, "but what did you expect, you went into this with your eyes open and must pay the penalty, so cheer up, Giulia."

She clenched her hands until the pointed nails

bruised her palms. She watched him raise his hat and stop at one of the tables and shake hands with a man who rose to greet him. Then he bowed as he was introduced to the overdressed woman with the man. They talked with animation for a few minutes, and Lorenzo, evidently refusing to sit down, turned and pointed toward the place where she sat in the balcony. The man looked toward her and the woman turned her head. Giulia in a spirit of recklessness waved her hand and laughed.

Lorenzo left them and walked rapidly through the garden to the restaurant. Giulia thought rapidly and decided on a plan of action while he climbed the stairs to her. She greeted him affably, when he fell into his chair opposite, breathless and glaring.

"Well, did you enjoy yourself? Who are your friends?" she asked.

"You are a fool. Why did you wave to them?" he asked irritably.

"I thought you pointed me out to them," she answered sweetly, "and I did not wish to appear boorish, so I——"

"So you waved your hand to a common gambler and his mistress."

"How did I know? You spoke to them of me. What did you tell them, I wonder."

Lorenzo pulled his mustache furiously.

"Pesta!" he said, "you are most aggravating."

She laughed softly. "You are very hard to please," she pouted.

Lorenzo was a little softened. She was very pretty, he thought, quite the prettiest woman in the place and her clothes and general get-up were exquisite. The passion he had felt for her only a few days ago returned in a measure and he was tempted to smile at her and speak more kindly.

She rose from the table. "Excuse me," she said,

"I left a purse in my wrap; it has just occurred to me."

"Hurry up, then; we will go somewhere else."

He watched her as she walked gracefully into the glass-enclosed foyer. "She is superb," he mused, as he noticed the heads that turned and looked after her as she passed. When she disappeared he turned toward the other table and took the slip of paper from his pocket and kissed it, nodding his head. The woman smiled and raised her glass again. He took a sip of champagne and looked unutterable things.

A young man who had been watching him, nudged his companion and they both laughed.

Lorenzo flushed and puffed his cigar rapidly; a few began to leave the seats before the stage and many of the tables about him were already emptied. Occasional shouts rose above the music from without the circle of trees. He could hear the *fiacres* jingling off, taking the crowds to other places. The performance was nearly over; the head waiter stood near his table insinuatingly. Lorenzo tried not to look in his direction, but at last catching his eye he approached. "What can I do for monsieur?"

"L'addition," he said shortly.

The waiter produced the paper, smiling. Lorenzo added up the figures, which were considerable for dinner for two. He disputed one or two items and the waiter finally went off to the cashier's desk to have the bill corrected; and still Giulia did not return.

He was growing very impatient. The waiter returned and submitted the bill again; it was found correct and Lorenzo gave him two one hundred *franc* notes. In a moment he returned with his change. There was nothing further to wait for. He looked about the place; nearly everyone had gone. He rose and walked to the cloak room and asked the woman if madame was ready.

"Ah! *oui,* madame—the beautiful lady in the blue dress with the pear-shaped diamond at her throat—she remembered she had come in with monsieur. Ah! *oui,* she had come and taken her wrap and gone downstairs to the lobby; she though monsieur was waiting below. Ah! *oui*——"

Lorenzo did not wait to hear the rest. He gave her a *franc* and hurried below.

The concierge remembered perfectly when monsieur and madame had arrived together. He had called a cab for madame and she had driven off alone.

Lorenzo gave him a *franc* also and hurried from the place. He disregarded the importunate cabbies and walked rapidly down the Champs Elysées toward the Place de la Concord. He wished to think; why had she left him alone? It was a curious psychological fact that he felt no resentment, no anger, only an intense fear that he had lost her.

CHAPTER XXX

Lorenzo crossed the Place de la Concord to the Rue di Rivoli, which he followed to the Hotel Meurice.

"Has the Contessa Graca returned?" he asked the clerk at the desk.

"I will inquire, monsieur."

In a moment he returned.

"I am sorry, sir, but Madame La Contessa is suffering from an indisposition, and begs to be excused."

"Ask her, if you will be so kind, if there is any message." He fidgeted and walked about impatiently.

"Nothing, to-night, monsieur."

"*Grazie,*" he said absently, reverting to Italian.

He walked to the street in a purposeless manner, and stood for a moment under the *port-cochere* of the hotel. He was entirely sober now, but very thirsty. He crossed to the Café Bodega under the Hotel Continental. It was closed, so he continued back to the Rue di Rivoli to the Rue Royal, where he took a seat at an iron table on the sidewalk in front of Maxim's, and watched the late arrivals. After a time, the woman who had dropped him the note at the Ambassadeurs drove up to the curb with her friends. She greeted him at once.

"Won't you join us?" she called across the tables.

He went to her, and as the others appeared to offer no objections, he walked in with them past the bar where men and women sat on high stools to the restaurant beyond. The tables were all occupied on the main floor, but they found a very good location on the platform enclosed by a brass rail, where they could look down upon the crowd.

Most of the girls and many of the men knew his party, and exchanged greetings with them. They were very gay and seemed to have drunk considerable champagne.

Lorenzo listened to their chatter a little absently. He was thinking of Giulia and wondering what the result of his irritability would be, for he had long since admitted his fault to himself and was all eagerness to see her again and explain.

The girl beside him had been inclined to be very friendly and to treat him as her own particular possession, but as he was rather depressed and quiet, she turned her attention to her companions and left him very much to his own resources. After a lively exchange of badinage in which she had come off second best, she turned to Lorenzo.

"Is it not stupid here to-night, monsieur?" she said, waving her hand to the crowd beneath them.

"Rather," he said.

"Let's go on," she continued, turning to the others.

"La Ratmort," said one.

"Bal Tabarin," from another.

"Café Americaine," said the third.

"L'Abbeye," said the first.

Lorenzo remained quiet.

"Where would you say, monsieur?" asked the girl.

"Oh," he said, with a start. "I am afraid I cannot join you."

"I say we make a night of it. Let's look in on them all," said the girl's escort, who seemed relieved at Lorenzo's refusal.

"Good," they answered.

Lorenzo went as far as the street with them.

"Are you sure you won't join us?" asked one of the men, determined to be polite.

"Come on," urged the girls.

"Not to-night, thank you. I am sorry."

He stood on the curb and watched them drive off. He raised his hat in reply to their waving hands and shouts until he could no longer distinguish their words. They were a gay crowd, and under somewhat different circumstances, he would have been glad to have joined them, but he was unable to dispossess Giulia from his mind. He strolled through the Garden des Tuilleries toward the Louvre and at last found himself before the Palais Royal.

Without hesitation, he crossed the street and entered the house marked Twenty-six, and climbed a dark flight of stairs to the main salon which was brilliantly lighted with three chandeliers of crystal and bronze. Beneath the central one stood a long roulette table.

Around this as the hub, many smaller tables were placed near the walls at which eager players watched the turn of a card with burning eyes, or staked on various other games of chance.

Lorenzo walked to the long table in the centre, but as he was unable to get near enough to it to play with any degree of comfort because of the crowd, he watched the more favored players with complete indifference. He scarcely spared a glance for the pale haggard youth who watched his last *louis* gathered in by the croupier's rake, with hopeless eyes. He resented the touch of his shabby elbow as he passed by and slowly made his way from the room to the Seine, a bitter smile on his lips.

He watched a rich boy dissipating an inherited fortune in furious hazards, without method, without reason, scattering gold and notes at random, laughing foolishly when they were swept away or delightedly counting his winnings. An employee laughed with him when he laughed, and sympathized with him when he frowned, and invariably wished him better luck next time.

Lorenzo observed two chart players with a smile, one on each side of the table, watching the little ball as it fell, with lack-lustre eyes, marking each number as it was called upon a long sheet of paper with methodical regularity. He knew them for professionals who eagerly await the first click of the ivory ball, eating irregularly, sleeping little, continuously poring over their columns of figures and dreaming of possible combinations during the restless hours between dawn and noon, in which they tried to rest. Sometimes they won, and again they lost. Often they were unable to follow their theory to its conclusion, afraid to risk the heavy stake needed to recoup their past losses and put them well ahead, afraid to accept their opportunity only to see the ball drop in the number which they watched so eagerly. But even then, although heavy losers, congratulating each other on the perfection of their theory and dreaming of the day when they would have the courage to follow it logically and break the bank, dreaming of that day which would never come.

He elbowed past an old derelict, toothless and wrinkled, who chortled gleefully at a play that pleased him or shook his head regretfully whenever he was out of sympathy, without a franc in his deep pockets, but full of advice as to how to beat the game, a living example of the evil practice, still greedy, still consumed by the passion of play and the mellow chink of gold, ready and willing to bore whosoever would listen with tales of past triumphs. Lorenzo pushed by him roughly and took a stand close by the board, as a party of gentlemen who played occasionally as they would dine or buy tickets for a theatre, passed on to lose a stipulated sum at another game.

The croupier nodded to Lorenzo pleasantly and passed him a stack of louis in exchange for a large note.

"Make your game, gentlemen," he called, deftly arranging the coins and notes in methodical piles.

The wheel turned quickly, the little marble clicked and bounced cheerfully.

Lorenzo, still thinking of Giulia, recalled that her apartment was number twenty-seven. He placed three louis on the number and two on each corner.

"The game is made—bets closed," called the croupier, or rather, he made two inarticulate sounds which by long usage have come to be accepted in place of the actual words. The marble dropped into a space on the wheel which continued to revolve.

"Number twenty-seven, red, odd, in the third dozen," called the croupier. Everyone looked at Lorenzo. His had been the only stake on the number.

The croupier counted out a number of bills and gold pieces.

"One hundred and seventy-nine," he said with a smile, "thirty-three hundred and eighty francs. Monsieur is lucky to-night."

Lorenzo piled the money before him, the croupier called the game, and spun the wheel; the original stake still remained as it lay on number twenty-seven.

"Does monsieur wish to leave his stake?" he asked.

Lorenzo reached for it, then changed his mind.

"Yes," he said carelessly.

The ball dropped.

"Number twenty-seven, red, odd, in the third dozen repeats," called the croupier unmoved. Every eye in the room sought the lucky player.

Lorenzo laughed a little nervously and sat down on a stiff cane-covered chair which a ready attendant placed for him.

He made no attempt to alter the coins as they lay about twenty-seven, thinking he owed the number at least that much. The bald-headed professional, the rich novice, the haggard roué, the idle trifler, all

looked at him with curiosity and eagerly watched the ball as it bounded about in the wheel.

"Number sixteen," called the croupier, "black, even in the second dozen." Lorenzo had won again; two of his coins rested on the corner and overlapped sixteen, so that he won sixteen louis and lost seven.

A murmur ran around the room. Never had they seen such luck; he would break the bank. Who was he?

Lorenzo laughingly refused to touch the original wager; the ball spun again.

"Single O," the coins were swept with all of the others on the board into the bank. No one had been on the single O.

He changed his method of play now and selected three numbers. Twenty-seven, of course, fourteen, Giulia's home address, and four, the date of her birth. He had learned that she had been born on the fourth of August.

He played in this way for a considerable time without any special result, varying the combinations, but always revolving around the three selected numbers. At the end of an hour and a half he was still some five thousand francs ahead.

He asked for a pint of champagne, drank half of it and continued to play; many had gone, but a crowd of fourteen or fifteen still lingered around the table playing little but watching his game closely. Fortune smiled on him to an unusual degree. He left his winnings together with his stake and saw them multiplied time and again. At twenty minutes past five, the croupier straightened up and looked about the little circle with a patient smile. "Gentlemen, the bank is closed." A sigh of relief rose from the strained spectators. Lorenzo had won one hundred thousand francs and the bank was officially broken.

CHAPTER XXXI

Lorenzo was unable to sleep at all that morning; his nerves were in such a disordered state that he rolled and tossed about in his bed until the sounds of awakening life drove him from the hotel. He drank a cup of coffee at the Café de la Paix and started down the Boulevard des Capucines to the Madeleine and turned into the Rue Royale. Street cleaners in blue blouses wheeled long lines of hose along the slippery pavements on little rollers, which gave them the appearance of huge centipedes. Boys rushed in all directions calling "La Patrie" in shrill voices. The cafés were deserted and unattractive; the waiters in dirty aprons sweeping between the tables piled high with chairs. Market wagons passed by in a continual stream, canvas covers drawn tightly over their produce to keep out the dust and dirt, the heavy Norman horses nodding their heads under thick manes and heavy trappings.

A 'bus passed a gendarme standing on the isle of safety at the junction of the Boulevard Madeleine and Capucines and jogged toward the Place de la Bastille with a fine disregard for the other traffic; the news booths, gay with posters and highly colored periodicals, were open and doing a thriving business with workingmen hurrying to their labor, with boys and clerks and little milliners in short black dresses, white aprons and neat coiffures. He looked into a *brasserie;* it was crowded with men and women sipping coffee and chocolate and eating delicate rolls, round, oblong and horseshoe shaped.

The stores, as a rule, were heavily barred, but as Lorenzo walked on the clerks began to roll up the

iron shutters, disclosing tastefully draped windows. The first he noticed was that of a dealer in sculptures. The central figure was very striking, although rather grotesque, following the mode of the day; but, notwithstanding its Hogarthian satyr, it was a wonderful conception of Lot's wife as she turned to look back at Sodom and the fertile valley of the Jordan. The artist plainly showed the transformation in the pure marble, the gracefully draped figure seemed frozen and immaterial below the bust, pulsing with life above; one hand raised to her head appeared to be full of feeling, the other dead and listless. Lorenzo looked at it critically for some time, then entered the shop and inquired the price. The young clerk mentioned a considerable sum. Lorenzo made an offer to be submitted to the proprietor and left his card with the name of his hotel in pencil. He looked into a haberdasher's window crowded with fancy socks, gaudy neckties, handkerchiefs, stickpins and cufflinks, all in the prevailing shade of the moment; into a jeweler's, a silversmith's; into a queer little shop filled with cheap souvenirs, postcards, not only of famous buildings and scenes, but of women in more or less dishabille and others coarsely humorous. Beside these there was a medley of cheap crockery in grotesque shapes, red roosters and white hens in china, illustrative of a funny verse imported from America, miniatures of the Tour Eiffel in composition, queer Japanese figures carved roughly in what the eager salesman called jade, but what in reality was nothing but common soapstone. He passed Maxim's and wondered what had become of his companions of the night before. He congratulated himself that he had not joined them in their night's dissipation; he thought they probably had sore heads and tender stomachs by now. His own head was aching terribly and his stomach quivered at the thought of food. Absinthe might

brace him up. He turned and walked back to Maxim's, but the place looked repulsive in the early morning light and smelled vilely of stale liquor and tobacco smoke, mingling disagreeably with dirty water and wet wood.

He continued to the Place de la Concorde and stood by the obélisque de Luxor, looking about, uncertain what to do or where to go. Up the Avenue des Champs Elysées he could see the Arch de Triomphe and the roofs of the Petit and Grand Palais and the Tour Eiffel in the distance beyond. Facing the river, he looked across the Pont de la Concorde to the Chambre des Députies and the gilt dome des Invalides. Turning slightly to the left again, he looked through the Jardin des Tuileries to the Louvre and the dome of the Pantheon and the towers of Notre Dame.

"The heart of Paris," he muttered, and crossed to the gardens.

There were few people about in the park, mostly men out of work, eagerly scanning the help-wanted advertisements in "La Patrie," or callously smoking, in complete indifference to their plight. Lorenzo sat on a bench facing the Rue Castiglione and the Colonne Vendome rising over the Place beyond. He could see the windows of the Meurice and tried to locate Giulia's apartment. At last he placed it to his satisfaction and wondered if she would receive him. He glanced at his watch; it was but a few minutes after eight-thirty, and he felt it would be useless to attempt to see her before eleven.

He wished he had a paper, and seeing one lying on a vacant bench across the path, he walked over and picked it up rather shamefacedly, and after reading several of the articles partially, he found one that he thought he had read in the paper the day before. He cursed the stupidity of an editor who would publish the same item in the same words on two consecutive

days, and glanced at the date; the paper was a day old. He threw it from him in disgust and crossed to the Continental, drank an absinthe and had his nails manicured and was shaved in the barber shop in the Arcade. When he came out it was nearly ten. He walked rapidly to the Rue de la Paix, where he spent the next hour in the jewelry shops, looking for a peace offering.

He examined rings and brooches, bracelets, pins, necklaces, and jeweled vanity cases, all of the tempting creations of the goldsmith's art designed to break women's hearts and men's purses. At last he reduced his possible selections to two, a magnificent bracelet set with diamonds and uncut sapphires, and a necklace of blue-white diamonds in a platinum setting of exquisite workmanship; the difference in price was as one to four. He debated with himself a long time; the desire to do a gracious deed well conflicting with a natural avarice which urged him to do it as cheaply as possible. Finally he decided to take the necklace, but required a written guarantee from the jeweler that he would take it back and refund the full value of the bauble if it was returned within twenty-four hours. He thought it possible Giulia might refuse to accept it. He looked at it again, lying brilliant and fascinating on the white satin lining of its handsome case, paid over twelve thousand francs reluctantly, summoned a cab and drove the short block or two to the Meurice. holding the little parcel on his knees. He had been idly killing time for hours, but now the seconds seemed very precious until he could place his gift in Giulia's hands and ask her forgiveness. He decided to say nothing of his winnings at roulette and to allow his haggard eyes and pale face to plead his sufferings at what he was pleased to term her unkindness.

Giulia, upon leaving the Ambassadeurs, drove

straight to her hotel and sought her apartment. She was alone in the pretty rooms, and slipped off her clothes with a luxurious air of freedom. She was happy to be alone and counted the hours of parole on her pretty fingers. She knew Lorenzo so well she hardly gave him a thought after reaching her dainty salon. On the drive home she had mapped his immediate actions with rare intuition. She knew he would follow her as soon as he discovered her flight; upon her refusal to see him she felt sure he would pass the remainder of the night amusing himself, in what way she did not care to even surmise, and she believed the telephone would ring precisely at eleven and he would come up to her with some gift as a bid for her forgiveness. She puttered about a little, then went to bed and slept like a child. She took her chocolate in bed in the morning, running over her mail between sips. There were three letters in all, a short note from her husband in which he told her how much he missed her and hoped she was having a pleasant time; she smiled at the addendum, which, as usual, contained the pith of the communication and in which he told her not to hurry home, but to stay as long as she liked, as he thought the change would do her good.

She laughed a little sadly. "So he, too, is amusing himself," she said aloud.

The second was an invitation from a woman friend who lived at St. Cloud, asking her to luncheon.

The third was postmarked Milano. She read this over twice with great interest, then she puckered her brows in a deep study for a time, then read the last paragraph over again.

"The further we go," it ran, "the more appalling the whole despicable business becomes. It seems that the trust fund left for his invalid mother and sister was diverted, upon the loss of his own fortune, and he left the poor woman destitute and the object of

charity, on a little farm near Valenza, where she died in great want. The sister, who seems to have been very devoted, nursed her to the end, and at her death married the son of the people who had taken them in, and is still alive. She has two sons of eight and ten years respectively, fine, manly little lads. I have talked with her, and find she is very bitter toward him and will do all she can to bring him to justice. There are other matters too horrible to commit to paper, but the web is complete and we can take in our fly at any time after the first of the week."

Giulia folded the letter, placed it with several others in the same handwriting, in a pocket of her traveling-case.

"The first of the week," she said, "and to-day is Saturday. *Voila!*" Toto, the little Pomeranian, danced about her heels, barking joyfully. She dressed deliberately, sparing no pains to make her person as seductive and beautiful as possible.

The telephone tinkled. She placed the receiver to her ear.

"Ask him to wait a few minutes."

She walked to the window and looked out across the gardens to the river. She recalled Bernardine de St. Pierre's legend. Seine, the beautiful daughter of Ceres, goddess of grain and plenty, wandered with her mother through all the countries in search of her sister, Proserpine. At last they came to a fertile land which she begged might be given her as her own. Ceres granted her request and left her in Hebe's care, lest Neptune should carry her off, as the god of the underworld had carried off Proserpine.

One day she was playing on a sandy beach with a number of little nymphs, when she saw the white locks and green mantle of Neptune, riding on his chariot, drawn by six sea-horses, his trident glistening in the sunshine. Seine fled through the meadows and

valleys, turning and dodging to escape her pursuer, who grew ever nearer and nearer; at last, when he stretched out his hand to grasp her, she called upon her father, Bacchus, to save her, and he transformed her into a river, which follows the winding path she took in her flight, and even now she hastens back twice a day, contrary to the course of rivers, toward her source, as Neptune pursues, ever keeping her own green waters separate from the azure sea.

With a sigh, Giulia called the office and asked that Signor Lorenzo be shown to her apartment. She sat in a deep, upholstered chair, away from the light; she looked at him coldly when he entered, but did not rise.

He hesitated a moment, standing in the centre of the room, unable to read her face, which was in the shadow. Then he walked forward to kiss her, as though nothing had happened. She calmly avoided him and pointed to a chair some distance from her own.

"Please sit there," she began. "We can talk better." Her tone was very precise and uncompromising. "Now you can explain why you treated me as you did last night," she said.

Lorenzo shifted his feet uneasily. "I am sorry——" he began.

"Stop," she interrupted. "You favored me with a tirade on that theme last night. Please say something sensible."

"I am afraid I was not quite myself; the wine——" he stammered.

"Nonsense. You *know,*" she said with emphasis, "that you *were yourself;* what you drank made you forget the hypocritical mask you usually assume."

"Giulia," he said.

"Don't Giulia me. You think because I am here in Paris alone that I am consumed by a passion for you, that I belong to you, and you can treat me with con-

tempt if you will, that you are my master as well as my lover——" She paused, choking for breath.

Lorenzo stroked the little package which he still held on his knee; he was very glad he had bought the necklace and not the bracelet.

"But be careful, signore; some of us are not the tender, simple things men of your type would like to make us; some of us are not easily won, and some of us are not easily cast aside when won."

"But, Giulia."

"But, signore," she mimiced. "I am not yet finished. When you brought me to Paris you thought you had compromised me to such an extent that I would be as clay in the sculptor's hands; you wished to mould me to your liking, to make my beauty fade, to make me haggard, old, to wring my heart and draw lines of suffering on my brow. You wished to destroy me as you have others, but remember this and then I am done." She rose and stood facing him. "I am not that kind. I will fight, my friend; every petty slight you place on me will be returned many times unto you."

"But, Giulia, look!" He untied the box and held the glittering necklace before her, turning it from side to side that the light might strike the perfect diamonds most effectively. "See what I have brought you."

She glanced at it carelessly.

"Put it on the table," she said, and leaned back in her chair languidly.

He looked at her in amazement.

"I thought you would bring something of the kind. It is very pretty," without any appreciation.

"You are not pleased?"

"Oh, yes, it is about what I expected, as I said before. You may go now; I am very tired."

"You will see me again," he begged. "You are not

sending me away! Won't you lunch with me?" He glanced at the necklace.

"Not to-day. You may call for me at seven-thirty for dinner. I should like to go to Paillard's. Please engage a table."

Lorenzo turned at the door and looked back at her, dazzling and unapproachable. She motioned imperiously, and he passed out.

Giulia laughed and looked through the open window to the river.

"Lucky Seine!" she said. "Those of us who have no fathers to change their unhappy daughters to laughing streams must take care of themselves as best they may."

CHAPTER XXXII

"Well?" asked Ramona one morning, a few days after Rosa's debut as a street singer. "Well, how do you like it?"

"The singing? Oh, it is great fun. I like it."

"I must tell Paolo not to keep you up so late; your eyes are too bright."

"Please don't, Ramona dear." She put her arm about Ramona's waist. "It is such fun and it will only be for a little time now. Paolo told me we would go on the day after to-morrow or the next day. So you see there will be but two or three nights at the most, then I promise to go to bed with the birds every night."

Ramona smiled and patted her curls.

"I have seventy-two *lire* and thirty-seven *centesimi* now," Rosa confided archly.

"*Dio mio,*" Ramona said, raising her hands in affected dismay. "It will be unsafe to keep you with the caravan before long, because of brigands. When they hear of your treasure we will have to post a guard every night."

They both laughed. Ramona looked very pretty and romantic in her gay dress, her hair bound in a yellow kerchief, her skirt pinned back over a short bright petticoat, showing a trim ankle and arched foot, her round arms bare to the elbow and wet and shining from the water in which she had been washing.

"You are ready first," she said, looking Rosa over critically, as she dried her hands on a coarse towel.

"Yes, I have been ready for some time."

"Perhaps you will buy a horse," Ramona suggested.

"You are mean to make fun." Rosa dropped her eyes and dug her toes in the sand.

Ramona laughed and hugged her; they were both dressed in their best, as it was the big day of the horse market. The finest draught horses and the best carriage horses were to be sold at auction, and as good prices had been paid right along for anything with four legs, there was a feeling of suppressed excitement in the air. Men hurried by, calling and shouting to one another in loud voices; occasionally a horse whinnied from one end of the parade and was answered by others all around the grounds. A bugle sounded signals from time to time, warning the owners and breeders of the time remaining before the opening of the sale. High carts with beautifully gowned ladies and gentlemen in yellow gloves and shining hats dashed by, the little grooms in brass buttons and tight breeches, holding on for dear life on the rumbles behind.

There was a great fanfare from the direction of the town, and Ramona and Rosa rushed to the road, just in time to see a big yellow coach drawn by four shining bays dash by, the wheelers pulling with long, even strides step for step, the leaders prancing and dancing over the springy turf in great style. As they turned into the parade two nimble grooms in sporting livery jumped to the ground and ran lightly beside the coach, while another blew on a long brass horn with a great flourish. Rosa clasped her hands and shouted to Ramona so that she might be heard above the din.

"It's almost as good as a circus."

Ramona nodded her head in reply and stretched out her hand to Rosa. "Let's go a little nearer, so we can see better."

They walked down the road a hundred yards or so and took their places on a little mound shaded by some chestnut trees. They had a very good view of the paddocks, where stablemen were polishing the sleek coats in a last desperate effort to make them look

sleeker, while the horses laid back their ears and stamped and snorted, drawing their lips over their big teeth in playful efforts to nip something or somebody, and the ring, trampled by many hoofs, around the booth, where the auctioneer would stand and exhort the crowds to more spirited bidding.

The auctioneer took his place on the stand surrounded by his assistants. He looked at his watch and waved a signal to the bugler who blew a long blast on his trumpet. The procession started from the further end of the enclosure. A huge team of heavy grays led the line, their small heads tossing the bangs from their kind eyes; their nostrils showing red as they sniffed the soft air eagerly and walked majestically around the ring, necks arched, tails held high, the iron muscles quivering under their shining flanks and deep chests. They were the personification of quiet power and good manners from their pointed ears to their heavy fetlocks. The breeder smiled and bowed to the shouting crowd as he led them by a thin cord back to their station in the paddocks. Pairs of bays, roans, blacks, dappled grays, seal browns, whites and piebalds followed in bewildering array; some walked quietly under perfect control, others, wild shaggy fellows from the mountains, reared and plunged and kicked and showed their teeth in impotent fury, sometimes lashing out with their iron-shod hoofs.

The men, too, were of various characters. There were big, kind-eyed breeders who loved their animals second only to God and their families, who guided them with gentle hands and soft voices; men with shifty, crafty eyes, eager to jab a spur or to tighten a curb maliciously whenever they fancied themselves unobserved, ashamed of their cruelty, yet cruel withal; and these were the trainers who produced undependable, tricky animals, mountain men of coarse, brutal

features, their shirts open to the waist, exposing tremendous, hairy chests, who cursed with strange oaths and beat their trembling steeds openly with heavy sticks of oak, four feet long and a quarter of an inch in diameter at the small end; rough, uncouth barbarians who believed a horse could not be trained but must be broken, often gouging an eye or raising great welts on the quivering flanks with their heavy blows.

After these followed the saddle and carriage horses, sleek, intelligent animals, turning their soft eyes searchingly here and there toward the sea of faces, as if looking for one to whom they rightfully belonged, champing their bits playfully and stamping their pretty feet in an excess of good spirits, capering like kittens and fawning on the boys who led them.

When they had all passed in review the bugle sounded again and the serious work of selling the stock began. The buyers were eager, and many spirited contests took place between the bidders, while the smiling breeders stood by, hands in pockets, jingling small coins as the price rose steadily higher.

The heavy gray team of work horses brought a tremendous price, the largest in the history of Verona's horse market. This fact was announced by the auctioneer with justifiable pride and was greeted by cheers and loud applause. A beautiful seal-brown saddle horse, with a white star in the centre of her pretty forehead, was bought by a lady who stood in a dogcart near Rosa and did her own bidding, for a proportionately greater sum.

Ramona whispered her name to Rosa and said she was a famous actress.

Everyone was pleased and smiling, the contented seller, the happy purchaser, as the hammer fell and the auctioneer bawled "Sold" for the last time in a husky voice, scarcely audible ten feet away. Men

rushed around the booth to receive their money, hugging and congratulating one another.

Ramona turned to Rosa and said: "We had better go now, *mia cara.* Was it not fine?"

"Oh, it was lovely," Rosa replied. "But look," she pointed to the crowd around the booth. A little boy, his hair matted and curly, gleaming golden in the sunshine, elbowed his way resolutely through the throng of eager men and stood before the booth, holding a small gray donkey by a halter. He raised his brown eyes to the auctioneer and asked a question. The crowd burst into peals of noisy laughter; the boy drooped his head and turned and walked dejectedly away. Some one called above the roar: "Get out of here and take that other ass with you!" Rosa clutched Ramona's hand, her little heart beating quickly in sympathy with the ragged little figure in short knickerbockers, which were frayed and torn and slapped around his knees. The donkey walked patiently behind, twitching his long ears alternately, his eyes squinted together as though he laughed, his whole appearance very droll, even to the moth-eaten tail, with a sticky tassel of hair at the end, which he waved regretfully from time to time, as if in adieux to the heartless crowd.

In a moment he was forgotten by all save Rosa and Ramona. They watched him curiously as he walked toward them. Rosa tightened her grip on her friend's hand. "What is it?" she asked softly. "He seems very sad."

The ragged little chap was very near them now, his lips trembled pitifully and his eyes dim. Unable to stand it any longer, he threw his arms about the donkey's neck and buried his face in his scraggy hair.

"Look! He is crying!" Rosa pulled Ramona toward him. Together they stood and watched the little sobbing figure; the donkey stood patiently blinking at

them, the black wet spots under his eyes looked as though he were crying, too, but his whole expression asked them to be patient with his little friend, even as he was. Ramona could hardly keep from smiling at the donkey, but Rosa watched the child, all sympathy for his sorrow. Her big brown eyes were ready to overflow and her lip trembled dangerously. Ramona glanced at her. "What is the matter?" she asked, approaching the lad and resting her hand on his shaking shoulders.

"They are going to kill him!" he sobbed, tightening his grip on the beast.

"Kill who?" Ramona asked.

"Victor Emanuele," he stammered.

"Come, come, my little man, tell us all about it; perhaps we can save him."

The boy raised his tear-stained face from the donkey's neck, which was quite wet, and dug his dirty knuckles into his swollen eyes.

"Save him?" he cried eagerly. "Please do—he is such a good donkey. He loves me—don't you?" He appealed to Victor Emanuele, who waggled his ears. "But he is too old to work, and can't drag a cart any more." He burst into tears again. "And—and Giordiano says he must be killed. We can't sell him alive. Nobody wants him, but he's worth ten lire dead." He clutched wildly at the donkey and nearly upset him from his frail legs.

"Who is Giordiano?" asked Ramona.

The boy clenched his dirty fists. "He—he is my second——" He could not bring himself to call anyone *padre* who said Victor Emanuele must die. "He——" He began again.

"Your mother is married again?" said Ramona. "He is your stepfather?"

"Yes," he admitted.

Rosa, who had said nothing, pulled Ramona down so that she could whisper in her ear.

Ramona laughed. "I guess so" she said; "it's your money."

"You see, it's like this," the boy interrupted, taking heart at their interest. "Vic here," he jerked his thumb towards the donkey, "used to work for my father—my real father—before I was born." His voice caught. "But he's dead now, and Giordiano says he can't live in our cellar any more; he says he eats his vegetables. He has a stand on the Piazza, you know," he explained. "He says if I bring him home to-night he will have him killed in the morning, but if I don't take him home I must have ten lire, as I told you, and I ain't got so much as a soldi," he added bitterly. "Lady," he added, with an inspiration, "don't you know anybody who wants to buy a good donkey cheap. You are a good donkey, aren't you, Vic?" He was all eagerness to dispose of his pet, although it would wring his heart. He did want him to live and continue to eat potato-peelings. "He'll eat 'em; he just dotes on 'em; he'll eat anything; won't you, Vic?"

The donkey took a step toward him and nosed about his shabby jacket. "See!" he cried eagerly, "he's asking for some now."

Rosa patted his soft nose and pulled one of his ears timidly.

"I'll buy him," she said suddenly, with a pretty air of importance.

The little chap gazed at her in wonder. It seemed impossible that the pretty little girl who he knew would love Vic and be kind to him could buy him all by herself, without asking anybody.

"You're not fooling me, are you?" he asked anxiously.

"No, of course not. Bring him along and I'll pay you."

Ramona led the way. Rosa and the boy walked one on each side of the shaggy beast, both thoughtful and silent, he at parting with his friend, she at the wonder of possessing anything bigger than a dog.

When he had his ten lire clutched firmly in his hand he shut the gate carefully and looked wistfully back. "May I come and see him to-morrow, just to-morrow?" he asked wistfully.

"Certainly," Rosa said; "come when you like."

Something moved him to raise his cap. "Thanks!" he called, and ran up the street. The donkey turned and looked after him, brayed twice and dropped his head.

The boy stopped and looked back; then he walked on more slowly.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Early the next morning Rosa got up and dressed quietly so as not to awaken Ramona, who shared the tent with her. She kneeled before the picture of the Madonna and Christ hung above a stand on which she always kept fresh flowers in a china cup without a handle. Having included Victor Emanuele among those upon whom she asked the Lord to heap his blessings, she tiptoed out into the morning air. The sun had not yet risen, and the first faint flush of dawn dimly lighted the encampment. She picked her way carefully between the wagons silhouetted against the gray sky, reassured the puppy who had growled sleepily, and finally reached the little paddock where the donkey stood, his ears drooped forward over his eyes in what Rosa considered the wrong way.

"Good morning, Victor Emanuele," she said, laughing, and held a carrot out to him. The donkey opened his eyes, straightened one ear and nibbled the carrot appreciatively. His teeth were not very good and he dropped half of it. Rosa picked it up and put it back in his mouth; he looked his thanks and twitched a couple of flies off his flanks.

Cyrano sat on the grass, yawning sleepily, but looking the donkey over critically. At last he stretched and walked over calmly to make his acquaintance. Vic laid his ears back flat along his neck, but lowered his nose in a friendly fashion; his experience of dogs had been wide and varied, and he was prepared for any emergency. They sniffed at each other for a little; then, having exchanged mutual felicitation in the way that animals do, they promptly appeared to forget each other, each after his own manner. Cyrano wagged

his stump of a tail and walked off, nosing about in the tall grass, tickling his sense of smell with the odors he loved so well.

Vic stretched his upper lip over his broken teeth and allowed his ears to stand or fall in whichever direction they saw fit, a sure sign of a donkey's peace of mind.

Rosa sat on the top rail of the fence and watched the donkey, laughing at his funny little ways and tricks of expression.

Ramona found her so an hour later.

"I thought I should find you here," she smiled.

"I couldn't sleep," Rosa apologized.

"Taking stock?"

Rosa laughed.

"Isn't he funny?"

Ramona leaned her elbows on the rail beside Rosa, and they jestingly inventoried his good and bad points.

"Beautiful ears," began Ramona.

"Kind eyes," supplemented Rosa.

They looked at each other and laughed. That seemed to cover his good qualities.

"Nice disposition," Rosa said eagerly, bound to give him his full meed of praise.

"Good digestive organs," Ramona added.

"Eats anything," said Rosa.

"And everything."

"Coat not very smooth," Rosa said regretfully.

"Rather fly-bitten, I should say." Ramona pointed to the lumps all over his back and sides, which were free from hair.

"Good average growth of hair. If we could transplant it from where it grows too thick to where it doesn't grow at all, he would be pretty well covered."

"Oh, he isn't as bad as that," Rosa pouted.

"Pretty near."

They looked at him thoughtfully.

"Too bad he's over on the knees."

"Worked too hard, poor thing."

"But his tail," said Ramona. "That's his crowning glory; looks like a last year's mop."

Rosa tried not to laugh.

"I won't have him abused," she said, pulling Ramona away. Her curiosity getting the better of her, she stopped and pointed to his fetlock.

"What's that lump over his hoof?"

"The *buon Dio* knows," laughed Ramona. "I am not a veterinary."

About half-past nine there was a timid little whistle from the road, and Rosa walked out to see who it was.

"It's you, is it?" Ramona heard her say. "Come in." She heard someone scramble over the gate and wondered why he went to all that pains when he might come through it.

"Buon giorno!" she called to the ex-owner of the burro. He had scoured his hands and face until they looked quite clean and very rosy. His little pug nose tip-tilted skyward in a roguish manner, his black eyes twinkled and snapped under a heavy shock of curly hair which he had vainly tried to plaster down flat on his round head. A crimson ribbon decorated his neck, tied in an uneven bow which would not lie flat; he tried to straighten it from time to time with his pudgy hand.

He grinned sheepishly at Ramona.

"Buon giorno!" he replied. "How's Victor Emanuele?" He dusted his bare feet with his hat, which he carried in his hand.

"Oh, he's all right," Ramona smiled.

"It's awful lonesome to our house," he volunteered.

"What did Giordiano say?"

"He didn't say nothing. He just took the money and went out. He ain't back yet."

"Your mother must be worried."

"She knows he's gone to the wine shop, I guess." He rubbed his back tenderly. "She gave me a beating for giving him the money."

"Why did you?"

"I couldn't help it. When he saw me come home without Vic, he asked where was the money. I showed it to him; he pretended to take it to count it, and then he wouldn't give it back."

He looked thoughtfully at his toes. "You see, he's only been my—what did ye call it?"

"Stepfather."

"My stepfather a few weeks and I don't know him very well, yet.

"Have you had breakfast?" Ramona asked.

"Yes-s," he said doubtfully.

"What did you have?"

He hung his head. "Well," he admitted, "there's apples in the cellar and I took one. 'Twasn't stealing, you know."

"Is that all?"

He nodded.

"Would you like some?"

"Please," he said, "but I'd like to see Victor Emanuele first."

Ramona prepared his breakfast while Rosa took him to see the donkey. As they came within sight of the paddock they could see the long ears wagging pensively as the beast rested his head on the bars and seemed to wonder what had happened to him now. When he saw the children approaching, his eyes twinkled a little, or so it seemed to the boy, and his upper lip twitched.

"See," he whispered, poking Rosa excitedly with a fat finger, "he's laughing. He knows me."

"*Buon giorno,* Vic," he shouted, and ran ahead. "Aren't you glad to see me?" he asked. He turned to

Rosa over the donkey's shoulder. "Isn't he just beautiful?"

Rosa looked a little doubtful. "He's a dear," she compromised.

Their greeting over, the boy sat on the top rail of the fence, where he could reach over and touch the mangy head at frequent intervals. He looked at Rosa shyly.

"What's your name?" she asked at last.

"Dante," he replied, squaring his shoulders; "the same as the fellow who's got the statue."

Rosa looked at him curiously. "What a funny name for a little boy."

"I'm not so little," he said resentfully. "I'm almost ten. But it isn't near so funny as my sister's," he laughed.

"What is it?" Rosa asked.

"Cleopatra." He shot out the word, grown easy from long practice, and pulled his chin into his chest, so that he might the better observe her dismay.

"What a nice name! Can you spell it?" Rosa asked.

"No. I can only speak it." He was rather disappointed that she did not seem amused. "Perhaps it isn't funny to you, but you've never seen my sister. She's this big," and he spread his hands.

"I think it's very funny," Rosa said politely.

Dante squirmed around on his perch uneasily for a time, a question burning on his lips. "What did you give him to eat?" he blurted out at last.

"I gave him hay and some oats last night and hay and a mash this morning, whatever that is. Paolo said it would be good for him."

"Paolo knows," said the boy, nodding his head sagely. He was pleased and slapped Vic playfully behind the ears.

"I wasn't storying," he explained, "when I said he'd eat potato-peels. He will, but he does like the taste

of sugar now and then. You ain't got any about you, have you?" he added, as an after thought.

Rosa admitted that she had not, but thought she might get a piece. When she had gone the little chap climbed down from the rail and said good-bye to Vic in his own way, unobserved. He threw his arms around the donkey's neck and talked to him as he would not have done before witnesses. Then he rubbed his eyes and climbed back, just as Rosa returned, followed by Ramona, with a steaming cup of coffee in one hand, a plate of bread, cheese and cake in the other.

"Why," he said, his eyes bulging, "it isn't dinner-time, is it?"

"No, but you might be hungry," Ramona said.

He took a big bite and looked around happily. "Did you bring the sugar?"

Rosa held out her hand, disclosing two lumps.

The boy's eyes sparkled and he reached out his hand eagerly.

"Eat your breakfast first, Dante," Rosa said.

"Yes, eat your breakfast, and then you can give Vic his sugar; but you must eat it all up," Ramona supplemented.

It was very still for awhile; nothing disturbed the quiet but the sound of Dante munching his bread and cheese and sipping his coffee. When he had finished half his cake he looked at Ramona beseechingly. "I'd like to give him the rest of it," he said.

"No," said Ramona, "you must finish it."

He took another bite and chewed it listlessly.

"You know, it's probably the last thing I can ever give him," he said, choking.

"You can give him the sugar."

"But that isn't the same."

"Oh, yes, it is."

"I don't think it is quite," he said politely. "I

wouldn't eat the sugar, and I would eat the cake."

Ramona smiled with understanding. The little shock-headed, snub-nosed lad wished to give his friend something that he would like himself, he wished to make a sacrifice. "All right," she nodded.

He walked over to the shaggy donkey and held the cake out on the palm of one hand, clutching him around the neck with the other, and said: "Eat it all, Vic." The tears rushed to his eyes. "You know I wouldn't have sold you if it wasn't to save your life, don't you?" The donkey blinked and ate the cake with evident enjoyment.

"I must go now." He drew the back of his hand over his eyes. "Thank you," he said simply, looking unutterable words of love and gratitude.

"Must you go?" Rosa asked. She liked the kind-hearted little fellow.

"Yes, I guess I must," he answered, looking regretfully back over the paddock.

"What do you do?" Ramona asked curiously.

"I haven't got much to do now," he replied, "since mother got married; just keep out of the way."

"Come and see us again," Rosa said.

"Can I?" he asked eagerly, turning to Ramona.

"Of course; come whenever you like."

"Grazie," he said, his face shining joyfully, *"a riverderci."*

Rosa sat on the grass at Ramona's feet. Cyrano came and lay down beside her. It was very peaceful, the white clouds hurrying overhead, casting little patches of scurrying shadow on the turf.

"Poor boy," said Rosa thoughtfully. Ramona did not reply, but her eyes were very tender. A man walked past, whistling shrilly, and disappeared. Ramona looked down at the child and dog. "You had better be careful or Cyrano's nose will slip back into joint again," she said.

CHAPTER XXXIV

"Where did you learn to speak English?" Rosa asked.

Ramona had just finished telling an Englishwoman's future. She watched her until she left the encampment and drove off in her *cittadine.* "I am half English."

She laughed at the surprise in Rosa's face, and continued: "My mother was a full-blooded Romany gypsy. She met my father, a big blonde Englishman, at Aix in Provence. She fell in love with him and they were married. He always lived with her people, wandering about the country with the seasons; north in Summer, south in Winter. He was an amateur archæologist and spent most of his time examining tombs and inscriptions on cathedrals or pottering around the Roman ruins wherever he found them. When I grew big enough to understand, he loved to take me with him and tell me stories and histories of the things we saw. That, *mia cara,* is how I happen to know so much of Verona. He taught me."

"And Paolo?"

"Paolo is true gypsy."

"But——"

"Well, you see, my father left me two very strong instincts—cleanliness and a mania for history. When I married Paolo he naturally tried to emulate me, so that we are both a little different from the usual run of our people."

"But you are half English?"

"Yes; when I was twelve years old I was sent to school in England, but I did not like it. To me the English seemed cold and indifferent. I used to live

through the long year with the one longing—Summer and the road. One day in early Spring, toward the end of my third year, I ran away."

Rosa, keen for a story, moved a little closer. "Oh! tell me about it," she begged.

"I am afraid there is not much to tell."

"Please."

"Well, then," and Ramona settled herself comfortably. "I was nearly fifteen that Spring, and amongst us, we gypsies, that means womanhood, while at the English school we were still children in short frocks and two braids hanging down our backs in various degrees of luxuriance, but always tight and plain. It used to amuse me to sit in one of the rear seats in the chapel and try and furnish a character for each pair of tails, as the tight little heads in front nodded in prayer or drowsiness. Except for these braids of many different colors, we all looked exactly one like the other—plain, smooth faces, serious, big eyes, pensive lips and flat figures in brown checked gingham and blue pinafores. I had just come from such a scene and was going to my room, which I shared with three other girls. Single iron bedsteads, iron washstands, heavy earthen wash-bowls and pitchers comprised the furnishings of the room, together with four stiff cane-bottom chairs on which we were compelled to hang our clothes every night before retiring. The dress, which was all of one piece, must be neatly folded and hung over the back, the pinafore, also neatly folded, over that, our vests and underskirts on the seat, stockings on the rungs, all neatly folded, mind you, and our square-toed, heelless shoes on the floor beneath.

"As I passed from chapel through the long, bare corridor a vision of this cheerless scene appeared to me. I glanced through a closed window; the outer or double pane of which but poorly kept out the bleak cold of the severe Winter which I hated, had not been

removed. A stretch of dry turf reached to the high brick wall which shut out the world beyond. I could see a single tree—rather forlorn, I thought—the new buds opening in a tender green. All of a sudden the longing for the open country rushed over me and I decided then and there to run away. As we passed through the formidable study where I had often been summoned by the head mistress for various petty offenses, a long crimson scarf on the mantel attracted my attention. I looked hastily about, snatched it from the mantel and hid it carefully beneath my apron. When I reached my room I threw open the window and looked off over the fields to the trees on the edge of the forest, feathery green with new leaves. As I looked I slowly unbraided my hair, rumpled it in two loose folds over my forehead, fastened it in a big knot behind with a bit of ribbon. I discarded my pinafore and tied the gaudy scarf over one shoulder and around my waist. Then I danced the *furiatta,* while my roommates stood by in frightened consternation.

"As I bounded and twisted in a perfect frenzy of reaction from the long inactivity and forced quiet, the door opened and Sister Agathe, one of the severest and most unlovable of the teachers, stood glaring at me. I did not see her for a time, madly swinging my scarf and capering about the bare floor in my stockings; the other girls sat on their cots, their feet drawn up under them, lest contact with me might infect them, too.

" 'Ramona!'

"The word held a world of reproach and condemnation. I glanced at the frowning Sister and threw myself on the floor, completely exhausted and hysterical. I cried and laughed by turns with foolish persistence.

When I seemed about to gain my equilibrium the thought of their consternation when they should discover my flight sent me off again in gusts of mirth. They put me to bed and treated me with a certain firm

kindness which made no impression upon me. When at last all was quiet I stole from my hard cot and dressed without disturbing the girls; then I slowly felt my way down the dark stairs and through the cold corridor to a little hall which led to a pantry. I found this locked, but the key was in the door. In a moment I stood in the cool night air, the stars twinkling at me overhead and the sweet, fresh smells of the night driving me on irresistibly to climb the wall and gain my freedom. In a moment I was over the wall and standing in an open field, the forest stretching a long black line before me. I had no place to go and only a few shillings in my purse, but I did not care. I was free. The soft turf felt springy beneath my bounding feet. I ran and ran until I was exhausted; then I threw myself on the ground and buried my burning face in the lush, dew-laden grass. After I had rested a little I went on up a hill into the woods, patting the rough bark of a huge tree as I passed in pure delight, listening to the night sounds, entranced. The croaking frogs, the chirping crickets and singing locusts were all very dear to me as they helped swell the symphony of the forest. An owl hooted far off in the dark distance. I stopped and listened eagerly for the answering call of its mate. Some woodland animal rustled off through the underbrush. I called to it softly to come back, believing in my ecstacy that all nature must love me as I loved nature. I fancied innumerable little eyes watched me critically as I moved about through their domain. A nightingale overhead trilled, shattering the quiet of the night with liquid, melting notes, like the tinkle of broken crystal. I stood with my hand to my heart, my breath coming in painful gasps, the blood tingling through my veins in sharp throbs that left me weak and trembling.

"Ah! Rosa," she said, as if in explanation, "let the birds, the fields, the hills be suddenly taken away from

one who loves them dearly, let that one be placed in prison behind gray walls, without sympathy or love, and let her look for days and weeks and months to a little bit of country through a little window, longing, longing for that which is always within sight but ever out of reach, and then perhaps that one will feel as I felt upon regaining my freedom, my life at a bound.

"I was very tired," she continued, "so I sat on a fallen tree-trunk and listened, listened as I never had before and shall never listen again, with all my heart, to the wonderful voices around me. At last the murmur of falling water grew insistent and finally dominated all other sounds. I followed the sound and found a gurgling stream. I knelt and drank the cool, sweet water eagerly, and for the first time seriously considered the step I had taken. I felt sure they would not keep me in the school any longer, so I had no great fear of being caught; in fact, I thought it would probably be better if I were found, for I felt sure my school days were over, and they would send me back to my people, the gypsies. My English blood has never been very strong. I think my father was a true nomad at heart.

"I judged it was about time for Sister Agathe to make her customary round of inspection through the various rooms. I fancied her as she stood beside my empty bed, a flickering candle tilted in her trembling hand, dripping grease drop by drop upon the polished floor, her nightcap somewhat askew over her scraggy, dead hair, her gray woolen nightgown showing beneath her heavy bathrobe, which did not entirely conceal the pink worsted bed-slippers, the only touch of color in the entire establishment, except the crimson scarf which I had sadly rumpled in my wild dance. I pictured the dazed, blinking girls answering her questions in frightened whispers. I could see her

tight, set lips part and could almost hear her say: 'Young ladies, let this be a warning.'

"I knew she would draw her robe about her in stiff folds and go out with her spluttering candle, carefully close the door behind her and go to her sister. I could even imagine the conversation which would follow.

" 'Well, I told you so,' Sister Agathe would begin. It was a favorite expression of hers.

"Sister Amanthe would sit up in bed, bewildered, sadly ruffled.

" 'What is it, Agathe?' she would ask, fear struggling with her drowsiness.

" 'That Romany girl has gone, run away. I hope she will not have the assurance to show her hoydenish face here again.'

"At that Sister Amanthe would sit bolt upright with a start, her corkscrew curls bobbing perilously on each side of her cap.

" 'What?' she would scream in her shrill voice. 'Ramona?'

" 'Yes, the little vixen. I told you no good would come of it, harboring those heathen. I hope you are satisfied.'

" 'Hope I am satisfied? What had I to do with it, I should like to know? You insisted on taking her.'

" 'You know very well——' Agathe would begin.

" 'I know very well,' Amanthe would interrupt, 'that it was your doing.'

" 'What had we better do?' Agathe would ask, placing the candle on the washstand and beginning to dress. 'We must do something.' Amanthe, who was the stronger of the two mentally and very domineering, would crawl out of her narrow bed regretfully. 'We must ring the bell and summon help,' she would say.

"I heard it ring from where I sat on my log; not

with its usual staid, quiet peal, which summoned us to prayers, but with quick, feverish strokes rioting in mad confusion, starting unexpected echoes and startling the good country folk for miles around out of a year's growth. Lights peeped out through the valley; the windows of the Convent blazed with unaccustomed brilliance. I could see them from my little hill. I could hear the farmers galloping their horses in mad haste to the institution, armed with old guns, pistols, scythes—the first weapons ready to their shaking hands.

"At dawn I stole down into the meadows where some cows were grazing, and drank my fill of sweet, warm milk. All through that morning I watched the searchers, hurrying about, with considerable amusement. At last a shaggy sheep-dog stuck his cold nose into my hand and barked and jumped about me joyfully. The farmers came running up, one or two fired their guns, which was the prearranged signal.

"My taste of freedom was over for the time, and I was led ignominiously back to the academy."

Rosa had listened very attentively.

"What did the sisters do to you?" she asked.

Ramona laughed.

"They packed my little trunk and handed me a letter from my father. Wait, I will read it to you." She went into her tent, and came back in a few minutes with the letter.

"'Dearest daughter,'" she read, "'when you receive this you will be in disgrace with your teachers, as it is to be handed to you only in that event. I fully realize your strong love of the roving life of your mother's people. I know that it will be impossible to keep you under the cold discipline of an English school very much longer, but it is my wish that you receive as many opportunities as an English girl should and have ample time to judge for yourself

what you will make of your future. I feel that whatever course you elect you will follow it in an upright, Christian manner; therefore, when you receive this you will realize that we understand, and will welcome you with the great love that has always been yours. You may show this letter to Sisters Agathe and Amanthe, and I herewith beg them not to bother to write to me concerning your misbehavior, as my whereabouts are uncertain. I shall expect to receive a very conscientious account from you in person. Enclosed you will find twenty pounds and the address of Signor Molinari, of Milan. Go to him at once, and he will inform you of our location and take the necessary means to send you to us in safety. Extend my felicitations to the good Sisters and ask them to think as kindly of you and me as they can. With utmost love, YOUR FATHER.'

"And that is all, dear," Ramona concluded. "Two days later I joined the encampment near Florence, and have since been one of the happiest women in the world."

CHAPTER XXXV

"Get-away night," Paolo called it, the last night spent in camp. Nothing remained but to fold their tents and steal away in the early morning. Rosa sat very close to Ramona and held her hand as she listened to the others talking quietly together—Marionetta, Gian and Paolo and the old *madre*. The children poked about in the shadows, playing some game with the mongrel dog. Cyrano watched them, his head between his paws, glancing at Rosa when their laughter grew particularly boisterous, but he did not attempt to join them. Rosa did not appear to notice; she had seen and heard a great deal in Verona which had made a tremendous impression on her pliant mind. The quaint town had become very dear to her; she was a little homesick at the thought of leaving it. Ramona droned to the baby nestled in her arms, gently keeping time to the refrain with her foot. Paolo struck a match and lighted his pipe, sheltering the flame between his palms, his eyes and teeth glistening unnaturally white in his dark face as Rosa watched him.

A peculiar whistle floated to them from the direction of the road. Rosa exchanged a smiling glance with Ramona and answered with a similar call.

"I thought so," Paolo laughed.

"He has come back to say good-bye to the donkey again," Rosa said.

"Hello," called Dante, appearing before them. "I just had to come back," he said sheepishly.

"Glad to see you," said Paolo jovially. "Sit down."

"Oh, I'm not going to stay."

"I know you're not," and Paolo winked at Rosa; "but you might as well sit down."

Dante slipped to the ground.

"How's Cleopatra?" Ramona asked.

"Rather peevish," he said disdainfully. "Hot weather, I guess, and prickly heat," he added as an afterthought.

"Too bad," Rosa sympathized.

"It doesn't amount to much, except she yells all the time and that makes the *padre* angry."

"Has he hurt you since?" said Paolo.

Dante shook his head. "I guess you stopped him," and he looked gratefully at Paolo.

"Well, you tell him that I am coming back."

"Yes, sir."

There was quiet for a time, all thinking of the punishment Paolo had inflicted on the brute Giordiano one day, when he came upon him beating the little chap unmercifully.

"His eye isn't healed yet," Dante volunteered, "but he doesn't bother me no more. When are you coming back?"

"In a few weeks."

"I say, could you take me with you?" he asked eagerly.

Paolo thought quietly for a time. "Not now, Dante," he said kindly, "but when we come back we will see how matters stand between you and the *padre*. Now, mind you, I make no promises, but we will see."

Dante's eyes sparkled.

"Did Victor Emanuele eat his dinner all right?" he asked.

They all burst out laughing; all, that is, except Dante, whose generally roguish little face was very serious.

"Did he eat his dinner, Rosa?" Paolo asked.

"Yes, indeed, every bit of it," she said.

"He's the biggest eater I ever saw," Gian said.

"I am thinking of selling a couple of horses, so that

we will have enough to feed the glutton," Paolo laughed.

"He can get along with less," Dante said seriously, "but if you will give it to him he will eat it."

"How long since he had a square meal before he came to us?" Paolo asked.

"I don't know," Dante admitted.

"Perhaps," said Rosa, "when he gets filled up once it will not be so hard to keep him full."

"I sincerely hope it won't."

Ramona had listened quietly. "Stop teasing, Paolo," she said at last, "you'll have the boy in tears."

"Who? Me?" said Dante, straightening his shoulders. "I don't know how to cry." He did not remember the tears he had shed at the thought of the terrible fate awaiting his pet the day of the horse sale.

"You forgot how awfully quick," said Rosa.

"Oh, that was different," Dante said, flushing. "I wasn't crying for myself that time, was I?"

"No," Rosa said doubtfully, "I suppose not."

"Well, that's all the difference, isn't it?" He appealed to Paolo.

"Yes, I think it is," he replied. "It certainly does make a difference whether one cries in self pity or from pure tenderness of heart at the thought of another's suffering. Yes, Dante, I guess you are right; that's all the difference."

"I never cry when they beat me at home," he said manfully. "Once I was burned by a hot iron and didn't cry; it hurt something awful."

"You're a brave boy, Dante," said Ramona.

He looked a little self-conscious. "I hope I'm not a baby," he said.

Rosa smiled at him in a friendly fashion, and the question of his courage was satisfactorily settled to his mind.

Ramona brought him a cake which he held gingerly

in his fingers and waited to see if the others were going to have some, too. Deciding it was meant as a special favor he broke it in two pieces carefully and offered Rosa the one he fancied a little bigger than the other. She smiled at him prettily, but refused.

"I couldn't eat it, Dante," she said.

"Please," he urged.

"I couldn't really."

"Please take it."

"I will take a bite," and she took it and bit a dainty little piece from the frosting.

He looked at it ruefully. "You didn't get any." She tried again, laughing, and handed it back to him, quite a respectable piece gone from the corner.

"That's better," he said, looking at it critically. "Watch me." There was no doubt of his ability to bite deep and well.

Ramona stooped and kissed him. "You are a dear good boy," she said. "May God bless you!"

Dante was a little embarrassed by this unaccustomed kindness; his under lip trembled and he felt the tears, so truly despised, very near the surface. He did not remember ever having been kissed before; he looked up at Ramona, whose pretty face was very kind and sympathetic. His voice caught a little. "I wish," he said, "I had a mother like you."

Before she could answer, Paolo placed his arm around the little shoulders. "Be a brave little man," he said, "and who can tell but when we come back you may have a mother very like her and a father very like me; would that please you?"

While he stood looking rather dazed from Ramona to Paolo, Rosa, who had been standing quietly near, threw her arms about him and kissed him. "You are a nice boy," she said, hugging him, "and I wish you were my brother."

At that moment Dante could and would have un-

dergone any hardship, any danger for his friends—his friends, the first he had ever known, the first who had ever spoken to him in kindness, who had ever shown him affection.

He brushed the tears from his eyes with both hands, but he could not stop them; his throat ached terribly, a great sob burst from it. "I don't care," he said, "it's all the difference, isn't it?" He turned his streaming eyes to Paolo for a moment, then looked away.

"Yes, yes, my boy, it's all right." Paolo's voice was rather gruff, his eyes dim.

Rosa took his hand and begged him not to cry, in her pretty childish way. After a while he looked up smiling. "I don't know what's the matter," he said. "I feel so funny. I guess I must be happy." He turned from one to the other. "I've often wanted to be happy. It hurts, doesn't it? but I like it."

Just as he reached the gate he turned and waved his cap. "Be good to Vic," he shouted, "and don't forget what you said about my mother and father, and—and sister."

"We won't," they answered.

"Good-bye," called Paolo, "and God bless you."

"Good-bye," he answered.

"Good-bve," he called again, as he turned into the road.

"Dear boy!" said Ramona.

There was no question as to her meaning.

"I must do something for him," said Paolo.

"What?" asked Rosa.

"I am thinking."

"It seems too bad to separate him from the donkey," Rosa said.

Ramona laughed.

"Rather a novel way to put it," said Paolo. "We have saved the donkey; now we must save the boy

for the donkey. Not so bad after all. Do you like him dear?" he asked, turning to Ramona.

"How can one help it, he is such a manly, unselfish, dear little chap."

"Shall we keep him?"

"I think we must if for no other reason than to take him away from that brute Giordiano."

And so it was decided.

Dante walked on regretfully through the narrow streets, hot and stagnant with decaying vegetation. He wished he were to sleep under canvas or out in the open with nothing above him but the stars. What had Paolo said? "Be brave!" That meant that he must crawl into the evil attic they called home and sleep in a stuffy corner, if possible, in the interval between the baby's screams and Giordiano's oaths and curses, but he was all of a glow and scarcely heard the abuse heaped upon him as he threw himself in his bed of rags dumped in the corner furthest away from the window, and fancied the life he would lead when he became a real true gypsy.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"What can we do?" Miguel asked dejectedly, as he sat looking out over the Giardino Pubblico from the window of the room he shared with Pietro in the Hotel Cavour.

They had been in Milano four days without a clew as to Lorenzo's whereabouts, and the strain was beginning to tell on them both. Pietro walked about restlessly, the question repeating itself over and over in his tired brain, "Where can he be? Where can he be?" Finally he stopped before Miguel and noted the sunken cheeks and hollow eyes with great pity. "We must be patient, my friend; it is absolutely useless for us to attempt anything until we can locate him."

"It has been so long," Miguel complained, "so long; it seems a lifetime since we left Como."

"And it may be over to-morrow. Come, you must walk as far as the Galleria with me."

He took their hats, and the door closed behind them. Together they walked through the narrow hall and downstairs. Once in the street they hurried along silently, eager to reach the insurance office.

"Where can she be?" Miguel asked dully for the thousandth time.

Pietro shook his head gravely. "*Le buon Dio* knows," he said sadly.

"And to think she may be suffering and in want. Oh! God, if I could but find her."

"You will, my friend, you will. Be patient."

Miguel threw his hand out in a gesture of impatience. "*Che diavolo,* Pietro," he said irritably. "Stop that infernal chant. How can one be patient?"

Pietro walked on indifferently, well pleased that he could divert Miguel's thoughts for a little time from the ever-present question, even if it brought abuse upon himself.

"Look at that!" Miguel stopped and looked eagerly where Pietro pointed to a perfectly equipped carriage drawn by a well-matched team.

"What about it?" he asked.

"Is it not handsome?" Pietro asked in an offended tone.

"Che diavolo!" Miguel walked on mumbling to himself.

"You did not like it?" Pietro persisted.

"For the love of Heaven, desist, you will drive me mad."

"You will go mad soon enough unless I divert your mind," Pietro muttered.

They passed through the Galleria and Pietro crossed the Piazza alone, and entered the building of the insurance company.

"Buon giorno, Signor Reisse," he said pleasantly to the young clerk, with whom he had developed quite a friendship in the past few days.

"Buon giorno, Signor Manzoni," the clerk replied, placing the index finger of his right hand across his lips. "Sh! Say nothing, but come with me."

Pietro followed him down the corridor and turned into a small room with the names of two gentlemen in black letters on the glass door.

"Be seated, signore," said the clerk. Pietro sat down in a comfortable leather chair while Reisse tiptoed across the room and gently closed the door. The room was just large enough to accommodate two roll-top desks, both closed, a long oblong table with a glass top, two revolving chairs, all of mahogany, and two heavy leather chairs, one of which Pietro occupied. It looked out on the Piazza.

"And now, signore," said the clerk mysteriously, "I have news."

"Of Signor Lorenzo?"

"Yes. A lawyer appeared here this morning at eight o'clock, before the offices were open, accompanied by two *custodii* and an order from the courts, signore, authorizing him to take possession of all of Signor Lorenzo's effects. They have placed huge seals upon his locked desk; they have taken other means, I understand, to attach his accounts in bank, his safe deposit vault, his house, his stable; everything of any money value has been confiscated."

"Humph!" said Pietro, rubbing his chin, "for what reason?"

"That I do not know, signore. I have talked with the attorney, but he will tell me nothing, saying we will all know in good time. *Pesta!* he is very aggravating; we are almost dead from curiosity, and he seems such a pleasant fellow otherwise."

"Could you arrange an interview for me?"

"I think so, signore; he is quite willing to receive any of us, but he simply sits and smokes and listens to what we have to say, but says nothing. Come with me."

Pietro entered Lorenzo's office and was introduced to the young attorney; they shook hands, stepped back a pace and looked at each other searchingly. Each was impressed with the force and purposeful manner of the other, while some mysterious intuition assured the lawyer that this man had business with him of a serious and important nature.

He turned to the clerk. "Signor Reisse," he said, smiling, "I beg you to excuse us for a few minutes. This gentleman wishes to speak to me of a matter of importance. If you will be so good—" he stepped toward the door.

"Certainly," said Reisse, glancing at Pietro in sur-

prise. So far as he knew, no word had been exchanged between them, save the ordinary formalities.

"I thank you," he said, closing the door behind him. "And now, signore," turning to Pietro, "how may I serve you?"

Pietro looked at him, curiously impressed by his quiet manner and dominating personality. His face denoted force, strength, audacity. His whole manner and bearing were self-reliant, but he had withal a certain kindness of disposition. Pietro knew at a glance that he was ever considerate of his inferiors and had a gentle way with women, no matter of what station; he felt sure that he loved children and dumb animals; he would be absolutely intolerant of any cruelty.

Pietro watched him closely as he walked back into the room with long swinging strides, and he stepped forward.

"Signore," he said, "I must ask you to be so good as to mention your name again. I quite forgot it in my interest."

The lawyer laughed. "I am called Adolfo De Waldis, at your service."

"I am glad to meet you, Signor De Waldis," and Pietro extended his hand. "Sudden fancies are often true guides. I believe I have found a friend."

"And, I signore, believe I have found another. My intuitions rarely mislead me." They gripped hands strongly, looking searchingly into each other's eyes. Then they sat down, facing each other across the long table in the centre of the room.

"Would it be possible for you to tell me why you have taken over this man Lorenzo's affairs?"

"First tell me, signore, whether you come to me as his friend or——"

"Not as his friend," Pietro interrupted, "I have every reason to despise him."

"Well, then, to be brief, Signor Lorenzo dissipated

his own fortune some eleven years ago and has since been living on his mother's and sister's portions, which he wrongfully possessed. I am here to see restitution made." He rose and leaned on the table. "The mother died in wretchedness, but there are rightful heirs enough. I am going to break this Signor Lorenzo," he struck the table with his clenched fist.

Pietro nodded his head and started to speak.

"One moment, signore," the lawyer interrupted. "In order that there may be perfect confidence between us," and he lowered his voice, "this brute caused my sister to drown herself in the Olano, and I mean to have justice."

"*Dio mio!*" Pietro whispered, "I understand."

De Waldis walked up and down two or three times in great emotion, then resumed his place at the table.

"Do you know his present whereabouts?" Pietro asked.

The lawyer laughed bitterly. "As though I held him in the hollow of my hand." He held out his clenched fist. "He is in Paris at the Grand Hotel."

Pietro jumped to his feet.

"Signore, permit me to summon my friend. It is in his interest that I am here. More than two weeks ago his daughter, a child of ten, was stolen by this man's agents. The poor father is frantic. Permit me to summon him. He is waiting across the Piazza in the Galleria."

"By all means," De Waldis replied. "Go, bring him."

Pietro rushed from the room, forgetting his hat in his haste. He ran down the stairs two steps at a time, and stumbled into Miguel's arms at the bottom.

"What is it?" Miguel asked, his face pale and drawn, his tongue dry and swollen cleaving to the roof of his mouth so that he could scarcely speak. "I

was coming up. I could wait no longer. *Dio,* man, what is it, speak!"

Pietro clutched him by the arm. "Come," he said, "He is in Paris. De Waldis will tell you all. We have him, Miguel, we have him. It is only a question of time now." He half dragged him up the stairs.

"De Waldis?" said Miguel, dazed.

"Yes, yes, the lawyer who is going to break him."

Two hours later Pietro summoned a *cittadina* and drove with Miguel to their hotel, there to pack their few belongings and catch the afternoon train for Paris.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The Paris express rushed through the last section of the tunnel of the Saint Gothard and shot out into the yellow sunlight. Pietro and Miguel blinked their eyes, blinded for the moment by the light, and then looked eagerly out of the windows upon the famous valley. The rushing Teufelsbrücke, foaming and leaping at their feet, wound under sturdy granite bridges of a single span, crossing and recrossing at frequent intervals, following the intricate windings of the wonderful road, leaping in great bounds down sheer cliffs, tossing volumes of spray, in which the sun painted tiny rainbows, into the clear air, or foamed about huge bowlders flung into the bed of the mad stream by some tremendous landslide. Behind them the mountains rose dark and forbidding in cold grandeur, stained here and there in soft colors, ashes of roses and misty violet, where the sun streamed upon the slopes covered with mountain rose, so beautiful growing in its native wildness, so disappointing when gathered. There were no trees, scarcely any growth at all on the bleak hills but the close-lying grass and flowers lodged insecurely on some ledge of towering granite. In the distance where the shadows were, deep white snow peaks reflected the lingering rays of the setting sun. A coach drawn by five horses nodding their heads in weary patience, toiled up a short grade before reaching the long descent that would take them to the Postplatz at Andermatt.

"It is very wonderful," Pietro said at last, in a low voice.

Miguel agreed by a silent gesture; he talked very little those days.

"I know nothing that can approach it except, perhaps, the sea raging on a rockbound coast on a black night," said De Waldis.

"That is truly wonderful," Pietro assented, "but spend a night on one of these mountains in a herder's hut and listen to the blizzard raging about those deep gorges and shrieking through those iron valleys, and every now and then the roar of falling rock as the face of a mountain totters, crumbles and crashes down into the ravine below to burst in ten million atoms; then you will realize the tremendous forces of Nature and the pitiful impotence of man."

"It must be wonderfully impressive," said De Waldis.

"The valley is impressive now," Pietro amended. "Then, it is awesome, fantasmal in its weird beauty."

They wound on down the valley, viewing its beauties from many different angles, often plunging into shorter tunnels. When they reached Amsted they settled themselves comfortably for the long trip to Paris. In due time they reached Flüelen and watched the lake of Lucerne unfold before them with a passive enjoyment of its great beauties of water and mountain, quite unlike the eager, almost painful, interest they had felt so recently, in the cruel gorges behind them. Dusk settled over the lake, reflecting the long black shadows on the surface of the quiet water. A steamer passed them going in the other direction, toward Flüelen, which they had just left, her lights shining brightly and lending a touch of life and comfort to the dark scene.

It was the hour when Miguel grew most despondent and longed for Rosa, that quiet time between day and night, when all things seem exaggerated and unreal. Pietro exchanged glances with De Waldis and both tried to think of some subject that would take him out of himself.

"Lovely night," Pietro began lamely, and looked off over the lake. Miguel ignored him.

De Waldis, wiser in human nature, decided to go right to the root of the evil and encourage Miguel to unburden himself.

"How old is your little girl?" he asked.

Miguel started and coughed before he replied.

"She was ten the seventeenth of last month."

"Charming age," he said pleasantly. "She must be a great comfort to you."

"Yes," Miguel replied shortly.

Pietro glanced at him in consternation and tried to press his foot surreptitiously.

De Waldis stared at him without understanding, moved his foot and continued: "My little girl would have been nearly seven had she lived."

"Had you a child, a little girl?" Miguel asked, with the first show of interest he had expressed in days.

"Yes, a girl and a boy. They were killed at Messina in the earthquake."

They both glanced at his downcast eyes and set mouth, grey and drawn around the corners.

Neither spoke, but Pietro at least realized what he meant to do and the effort it cost him. Miguel roused himself and sat up straight in his corner where he had been lounging with his hat drawn over his eyes.

"Both?" he asked.

"Both," De Waldis nodded, "and their mother."

"Horrible; and you?" Miguel asked.

"I was away in Rome. The baby, the boy, was very delicate; we thought the sunshine and the warmer climate of the south might save his life."

"You, too, have your burden."

"Oh, yes," De Waldis answered patiently. "We all have, but it was very hard."

Miguel looked at him with increased interest, wondering at the fortitude of the man who had evidently

suffered so poignantly and still bore himself so bravely. He began to review his own actions on learning of Rosa's disappearance. He felt that he had been stunned, incapacitated, by the great blow. He looked at Pietro a little wistfully.

"Pietro, my friend." He said no more for the moment, resting his hand on his shoulder.

De Waldis looked out of the car window to the fleeting landscape, surmising truly the state of Miguel's mind.

"Can you forgive me?"

Pietro, surprised, raised his eyes to Miguel's face.

"Forgive you, my friend! In the name of the good God what have I to forgive you, unless it be for the happy days you and the dear little Rosa have given me, bright spots in my lonely life. What is the matter with you, Miguel? Sit down and try and be calm."

"I am passing through the cloudy days and the dark nights now, and you reach out your hand to guide my poor stumbling feet. Without you I should have been helpless, a poor gibbering imbecile mumbling my sorrows in some shady corner of the poorhouse garden."

"What nonsense you are talking, Miguel."

"No, no. De Waldis, I call you to witness."

The lawyer turned from the window, his face very bright and pleasant. "Go on," he said.

"Here I stand before you," Miguel continued, "bereft of what little fortune I had, bowed down by a great loss, afflicted by a keen sorrow. I have spent my days fretting, complaining, casting the weight of my burden on Pietro's shoulders, while he has constantly exhorted me to patience and fortitude. I have sworn at him for a psalm-singing priest, a purveyor of platitudes. What have I not called him?"

Pietro laughed.

"Our sorrow," he emphasized the pronoun, "has

been great, our anxiety well-nigh overpowering, but, De Waldis, it has been equally keen to him. He has borne his share uncomplainingly, constantly trying to cheer me, the weaker, who should have been the stronger, the more deeply wronged and consequently the one who should have been by every human instinct the more vindictive, the more forceful. I have permitted him to shoulder the anxiety of working out a way to recover the child. I have been irritable, peevish, ungrateful—I am ashamed." He sat down the picture of dejection.

"Nonsense," said Pietro, resting his hand on Miguel's shoulder in turn, and appealing to De Waldis. "Do not believe a word of it; he has been fearless and uncomplaining, bearing by far the hardest part, the waiting, watching, inactive role, with no vent for the pent-up emotions, no safety-valve of action through which to blow off the expanding steam of passion. If he has asked me to be still upon occasions it was justified by my childish drivel with which I selfishly bored him in a vain attempt to stimulate my own failing courage. I have been selfish, boorish, thoughtless. It is I who am ashamed."

De Waldis smiled. "You are two dear fellows," he said, "and are both to blame in a measure."

They both looked up sharply.

"Why Pietro?" said one.

"Why Miguel?" said the other.

The attorney looked into their faces in turn and laughed. "Because neither one of you," he said in a big voice full of affected reproach, "ever took the trouble to make my acquaintance before yesterday."

They sat back relieved.

"And now your troubles will soon be over. I can only repeat that Lorenzo is in my hands, and if he is responsible, which I do not doubt, the first thing he

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"I MUST LEAVE YOU FOR AWHILE," HE SAID.—*Page* 229.

shall do will be to take you to your daughter." His tone was a little wistful.

Miguel looked up in sympathy, but, being at a loss what to say, remained silent.

"And now I suggest that we dine or it will be too late," said De Waldis.

After a restless night passed in vain endeavors to dispose themselves comfortably in the accommodations furnished by an International train *de luxe* they arrived at the Gare de L'Est on time. De Waldis called a *voiture de place,* and when their luggage had been inspected and passed, they drove to the Hotel Perey, to the southwest of the Madeleine in the Cite du Retiro.

While the friends freshened up, bathing and changing their linen, De Waldis came to them.

"I must leave you for awhile," he said. "Try and amuse yourselves. I have arranged to meet Signor Lorenzo at four this afternoon. You shall be present."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Miguel and Pietro were obliged to wait a little while in Giulia's salon at the hotel, while De Waldis talked apart with her in another room. Miguel sat silently by a window through which Pietro looked to the street, watching the restless stream of traffic flowing by continuously like some turbulent mountain current. The streets were very gay and full of life, and very uniform with their handsome buildings of the same style of architecture, with sloping blue slate roofs, pretty window boxes of bright flowers, and striped awnings.

The swish of curtain rings upon a brass pole recalled him from his reverie; he turned in time to see Miguel rise as Giulia passed between the heavy portieres, held aside by De Waldis, and entered the room.

She acknowledged the introductions and invited them to be seated. She turned to Pietro at once and talked very rapidly and very gayly for a time, seeming to avoid Miguel to a marked degree. He sat quietly with his elbows on the arms of a comfortable chair, his fingers interlocked, and watched her, a puzzled expression wrinkling his forehead. He peered at her over his glasses, feeling sure that he had met her before, but was unable to place her. "Contessa Graca!" he repeated; the name conveyed no meaning. With a slight gesture of impatience he turned and looked at De Waldis, who nodded in reply.

"Contessa Graca," De Waldis began, breaking in upon her *tête-à-tête* shortly.

Giulia looked at him momentarily in surprise, then turned back to Pietro and continued what she had been saying, without a pause. When she had finished she turned again to De Waldis.

"*Si*, signore," she said, "you were about to say—?" her voice implied a question.

De Waldis, who might very well have been somewhat disconcerted, smiled pleasantly.

"I was about to say that these gentlemen have come a long way to see you in regard to this Lorenzo affair."

"Yes, I know. You have explained the situation to me, so that I understand it thoroughly." She turned to Miguel for the first time. "Signore, you have my deepest sympathy, and I assure you I will do everything I can to restore her to you."

"Thank you, Contessa, you are very kind."

She was very pale, and her large dark eyes were restless and very bright.

"Signor Lorenzo will be here shortly after five, but I thought it might be well for you gentlemen to call a little earlier so that we might become acquainted, as it were, and talk over the situation."

"Pardon me, Contessa," De Waldis interrupted. "Perhaps it would be better if I explain. I have told these gentlemen that Lorenzo once frightfully wronged a very dear friend of yours, in fact a relative, and that you are co-operating with me."

"That is so, signore."

She smiled, not concealing the tears that struggled to her eyes. Miguel fancied her tone sounded relieved.

"I am desirous that Rosa should be returned to you—before any other steps be taken in this affair. The safety of your child is the most important phase of the situation. When you have finished with him it will be time enough for me. The only stipulation I make is that you refrain from extreme violence unless in self-defense."

Miguel started and looked at her keenly. There were many things he did not understand. For one, why did she call Rosa by name? He felt certain he

had not mentioned it to De Waldis. Then again, why did she think he might be driven to extreme measures? These but served to strengthen his belief that the Contessa knew him, and that he had known her somewhere in the past.

"I promise."

"Thank you," she said. "Knowing what I do of your experiences with him I feared it might be difficult to persuade you to look at it from my point of view. I do not care to discuss my connection with—this matter, and you will both greatly oblige me if you question me as little as possible. There are other things you must know. I am probably more familiar with Lorenzo's character than anyone else, and the punishment I have devised for him is the natural sequence of his misdeeds and will be far worse than death to a man of his disposition and habits. I have made many sacrifices to learn what I have learned, and it is probably needless to add that I hate him with every drop of blood in my veins, every nerve in my body." She concluded with a quiet intensity that left her even paler than before, while her hand fluttered nervously among the laces at her throat.

They all sat stiffly in their chairs waiting for her to speak again.

It seemed to Miguel as though he had been in this room before and listened to the same words spoken with the same forceful meaning, in the dim past. He thought it natural that the Contessa Graca should dispose of Lorenzo's future life in just this way, quietly, impersonally.

He listened to her next speech listlessly, the spoken words seemed to be but faint echoes of similar expressions heard long before; to him everything was ordered, settled beyond possibility of doubt; there could be no mistake.

"I mean to drive him out," he heard her say, "a

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MIGUEL SIEZED LORENZO'S THROAT BETWEEN HIS STRONG HANDS.—*Page 234.*

pariah, an outcast, despised by that society he has so long polluted. I mean to send him adrift, penniless, without place, without love, without sympathy, a homeless wanderer without hope."

Not once had Giulia raised her voice above its natural level, lending a terrible coldness to each syllable and dreadful augury to each threat.

The telephone rang. Giulia answered it. "Send him up," she said. She placed the receiver back on the hook and faced them.

"He has come," she said, and her eyes glittered like black diamonds in the dark.

No one moved. A rapid step sounded in the hall. Giulia walked steadily across the room and opened the door, turning her back so that she stood between them and the visitor.

"Welcome!" She spoke the single word with exultation. Lorenzo stepped into the room, turned and faced her, holding out his hand eagerly.

"You have forgiven me?"

Giulia closed the door, locked it quietly and retained the key. Slipping through his outstretched arms she waved her hand toward the interior of the room.

"Be seated, signore," she laughed, mockingly. Something in her tone warned him. He turned sharply, looked at Pietro and De Waldis in blank astonishment.

"What does this mean?" he asked suspiciously.

"Some gentlemen wish to see you," Giulia answered.

"To see me?" His voice was dazed and hollow. "Who are they? I do not know them."

"Are you sure?"

Lorenzo looked hurriedly about the room and noticed Miguel for the first time. His face grew greenish white, his eyes sought the dark corners of the room fearfully, like those of a cornered rat; then see-

ing no escape he turned and faced him, Lis lips drawn tight over his sharp yellow teeth.

"You," he sneered, vainly trying to summon his oozing courage. "What in hell do—you—want?" The last words trailed off until they were scarcely audible the width of the room. He turned away before the hatred burning in Miguel's gaze.

"One moment," De Waldis interrupted. "I would warn you that there is a lady present."

Lorenzo looked at Giulia.

"A lady?" he hissed. "A Delilah!"

Giulia shuddered and turned away.

"Stop!" Miguel stepped forward.

Lorenzo spat through his teeth on the carpet. "So that's it, eh? A new lover. Bah!"

Pietro caught Miguel by the arm. They were both trembling violently.

"You were cheap," he cried, rage choking him. "Cheap for a bauble. I bought you, for a few glittering stones won at a night's play. And so you discard me for this—" he called an evil name, his self-control fast vanishing.

Miguel jumped upon him and seized his throat between his strong hands; together they fell to the floor, splintering a light gilt chair beneath them. Giulia touched Miguel's shoulder.

"Remember your promise," she said calmly.

Miguel looked at her helplessly, then turned to the evil face beneath him. With a gesture of loathing he released him. Lorenzo rose painfully, steadying himself by grasping the table. He raised one hand to his head and his right hand stole to his belt beneath his waistcoat. De Waldis, who had been watching him closely, drew a shining revolver from his coat pocket.

"Give that stiletto to me," he said.

Lorenzo, startled, turned upon him, the wicked blade flashing in his hand. Meeting the leveled re-

volver, he threw the dagger upon the floor in a fury.

Pietro stooped, picked it up and placed it on the table between a jeweled cigarette case and a dainty bit of silk embroidery, half finished, in its round frame.

"Enough of this," De Waldis said sternly. He rose to his feet. "Where is Rosa Rappold?"

"So that's it? I do not know," Lorenzo sneered.

"You lie!" Miguel shouted, with fearful energy. "Look at me, you sneak, and repeat what you have said."

Lorenzo made an effort to be scornful. *"Sapristi!"* he muttered, reaching for his hat, which had dropped to the floor. "I cannot waste time with cattle." With his hand resting on the handle of the door he turned, "I shall swear out a summons for you, my man, for felonious assault." They watched him turn the knob and attempt to leave the room. When he found the door locked all his bravado fell from him like a cloak; his face grew livid and blotched.

"Open it," he commanded. "Who dares to restrain me against my will!"

He walked toward Giulia. "Give me the key."

"Careful!" warned De Waldis, tapping the revolver on the polished table. "Sit down."

Lorenzo did as he was bid with as much nonchalance as he could muster. "Well?" He tried to laugh sarcastically, but the twitching muscles of his nerveless mouth betrayed him.

"Now tell us what you have done with Rosa."

"Nothing; I have never seen her, I swear it!"

"Contessa, may I trouble you for a crucifix?"

Giulia rose and walked into an inner room.

"You might as well ask for a pass to Heaven as—"

"Silence!" De Waldis commanded. There was something in his tone that forced obedience.

In a moment Giulia returned.

"Take it!" De Waldis held out the crucifix to Lorenzo. "Now repeat after me. I solemnly swear by the Holy Mother of—"

"I refuse," Lorenzo sputtered. "I have told you that I know nothing of the child. That is all I will say."

"You refuse?"

"Is this the inquisition? Of course, I refuse." He started to rise from his seat.

"Sit down!" He fell back again limply.

Miguel stepped forward. "It is useless, my friend," he said to De Waldis, "I appreciate your kindness in endeavoring to help me, but there is but one way." He pulled up his coat sleeves and turned back the cuffs of his shirt. "I must ask you all to withdraw. The time has come."

Lorenzo slipped down into the hollow of his chair, his dry lips working and his eyes roving restlessly about the room. De Waldis motioned to Pietro and Giulia, who moved toward the door without a glance at the writhing figure. De Waldis prepared to follow them.

"Would you leave me to be murdered?" the frightened man screamed. "Save me! save me!" he begged, clutching at the attorney's sleeve as he passed.

"Save yourself," he said sternly, and avoided the outstretched hands.

They were alone. Lorenzo slipped to the floor and tried to drag himself on his hands and knees away from the relentless figure. When he had gone a few feet Miguel clutched him by the neck and half raised him from the floor.

"As there is a God," he whispered, "there is but one thing that will save you now. Where is my daughter?" He looked down upon the craven lump as he would have contemplated a venomous snake he must kill. He was surprised at his own calmness. His fingers moved

irresistibly, feeling for the man's windpipe. He shivered violently and grew deathly cold.

"You have one chance, will you take it?" he whispered.

Lorenzo's voice rattled in his throat.

"If you mean yes, raise your right hand."

The hand fluttered convulsively an inch or two from the floor, then Miguel felt the body relax and grow heavy in his hands; he allowed him to slip to the carpet, where it lay in a huddled heap as it fell.

Calling the others, he threw open the window and sat down beside it, his head sunk forward on his chest, his arms hanging powerless beside him, his body burning as with a great heat.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

They lifted Lorenzo from the floor and placed him on the couch, tore his collar and tie from his neck with scant gentleness and dashed water in his face. After a few minutes his eyelids fluttered and opened; he looked fearfully about the room until his eyes rested on Miguel, then passing his swollen tongue over his dry lips, he tried to speak.

"Miguel," Pietro called.

De Waldis gave him a glass of brandy and water. Lorenzo drank eagerly and his cheeks seemed to lose their greenish-yellow hue.

"Well, where is she?" Miguel demanded, his voice stern and unrelenting.

"Near Verona."

"Where?"

"I do not know exactly; she is with the gypsies.

"If you lie to me again," Miguel growled.

"Give me the crucifix," Lorenzo pleaded in abject terror. "I'll swear."

Pietro went to the telephone and called the office. "Let me know when the next train leaves for Verona," he said into the annunciator. "Ten minutes after eleven? Thank you."

Pietro went back to their hotel to give up their rooms and take their luggage to the Gare de L'Est.

De Waldis left them to transact some business of importance while Giulia and Miguel remained in the rooms, the latter to watch Lorenzo, who still lay restless and weak upon the couch. When the others were gone, Miguel resumed his study of Giulia's profile. He sat at the rear of the room, away from the light, behind Lorenzo, who could not see him without turning

his head. This made the latter very uncomfortable; his shattered nerves quivered in constant fear of those cruel fingers at his throat.

Giulia sat quietly, conscious of Miguel's fixed gaze and wondering whether he would recall her or not. It had been many years since he had seen her, and she had changed a great deal. Her hands trembled at the thought of discovery, but, gradually, a longing grew in her heart that he might know; she wanted so much to confide in someone, to tell her story to some sympathetic friend.

"Monsieur observes me very steadily," she said at last in French, looking at him from beneath heavy lashes.

Miguel walked over and stood beside her, where he could see the slightest motion of Lorenzo, but beyond his hearing.

"Yes, Contessa, I feel sure that we have met before."

"And yet you have forgotten me; you are not very flattering."

"It was a long time ago, and you were not as you are now," he added lamely.

"Well—"

"The rest I cannot recall."

She sighed. "It was more than ten years ago."

"You remember, then; I am not mistaken?"

"You are right."

"Won't you explain?" he begged.

"Well," she smiled somewhat sadly, "it was soon after your marriage." Her voice was very low. "You were living in lodgings on the Via Meravigli, in two pretty rooms; you were very happy and devoted to Maria, who loved you dearly. I remember the afternoon so well it seems but a day. We had been sitting together, talking over our childish days and the future, which looked very sad and unpromising to me,

when Maria jumped up and ran to the open window and leaned out. Presently she waved her hand and ran out and down the stairs to the street in a pretty tremor of excitement. I was completely forgotten in a moment. You came in with her and stood on the threshold a little surprised, your arm about her waist. You had not expected to find a caller. Maria had forgotten to mention the fact of my presence in her pleasure at your return." Giulia paused.

"Go on, please," Miguel said.

"After that I saw you quite often for a time and you were both so kind to me in my trouble that I have never forgotten. You were present at my marriage and went with me once to the prison in which they kept him."

Miguel started uneasily and looked hard at the pattern of the carpet, then he raised his eyes slowly and looked at Giulia's flushed face and downcast eyes.

"*Dio,*" he said huskily, "is it possible?"

"You know me now?" she asked shyly.

"You are Giulia—Giulia Riale," he said.

"Yes." He scarcely heard the whispered word.

"And where is he? You are the Contessa Graca. Is he dead?" There was suspicion in his tone.

"If you wish to hear my story, signore," she said, "you must let me tell it in my own way. My life has been very eventful since our last meeting."

Giulia's early history was quite familiar to Miguel. He knew that she had run away when little more than a child with a French engraver named Phillipe Riale, who, after having been sentenced for forgery, married her upon completion of his term and gave his name to the child she bore him while he was in prison. He also knew that the child died something more than a year after the Frenchman's release; of the years that followed he knew nothing.

"When the child died," Giulia began, "we lived

quietly at Rouen, where Phillipe had employment, and we were quite comfortable and had the respect of our neighbors, as his crime had been committed in Italy. We managed to conceal the fact for a long time, until one night he was recognized by a drunken thief, whose enmity he had aroused in prison, and was denounced before a number of his friends. The next day we stole away and wandered through France. Phillipe was dejected and very morose, living continually in the fear of discovery. He became very unpopular and could only get work for a few days at a time. Then we would go on again. I noticed that he was strongly impelled to return to Italy. I never could account for it; therefore, I was not surprised one night we were at Nice, when he burst into the room where we were lodging and announced that we would go to Milan by the first train in the morning.

"My arguments were all in vain, and at last I was forced to consent. Once there we seemed for a time to prosper. Phillipe always had plenty of money and seemed to have steady employment. We were very gay that Winter; we made several friends who appeared to be well-to-do. They were very jolly and open-handed; we frequently dined out and went often to the theatres. One night we were entertaining a young married couple at dinner in our cozy flat when two *guardii* walked in and took Phillipe away. That was nearly three years ago. He will be free in a few days."

Giulia walked into her bedroom.

Miguel sat quietly thinking over what he had heard until she came back and resumed her story, as though there had been no interruption.

"He assured me that he was innocent, and I believe him, but it was impossible to prove it, and his past record was very much against him. He wrote me from prison often of a man whom he had met there whom he believed innocent, like himself. From him

he learned of Maria's death and its cause." For the first time Giulia showed some emotion. She hesitated for a moment.

"I was alone and penniless at that time. I had lived honestly, but miserably, doing what I could. One day I met a girl who sang in the chorus of a big theatrical production and she eventually got me a position with them. To understand what follows, you must know that I had loved Maria better than anything else in the world. When I ran away with Phillipe she was the only one that showed me any sympathy; the others all turned their backs and spat through their fingers when I passed. I had loved Maria as a baby; we had grown up together and she was very, very dear to me —my pretty little half sister."

Miguel started and looked at Giulia sharply.

"You are surprised?"

"I did not know," he said.

"No, I made Maria promise she would never tell you. You see, I was not much to be proud of."

"You should not have done that; I might have helped."

"*Grazie,*" she said softly.

"When the full story of Maria's dreadful death and her sufferings at that man's hands," she jerked a contemptuous thumb toward Lorenzo, "was made known to me, I swore to make him suffer even as she had. It seemed an impossible task at first, but at last, a little fop whom I had come to know and despise asked me to marry him; in a moment I saw my way. I knew that he moved in the same circle as——", she pointed toward the couch.

Lorenzo, who had been watching her, turned his face toward the wall and closed his eyes; he could not hear a word they said, but Giulia's scorn cut him like a knife.

"In short, I married Conte Graca."

Miguel leaned forward in his chair, an expression of pain upon his face. "You committed bigamy?" he said.

"Wait!" Giulia raised her hand in appeal. "At the time I was desperate and in the greatest want. I had reached the point where I had fully made up my mind to take a protector. Do not frown. Life is not very pretty sometimes; it is hard for some of us to surrender it for a theory."

Miguel started to protest.

"Perhaps you are right. I know what you mean to say, but temptation is very strong. I do not wish to argue with you. I feel sure you would best me, but whatever its ethics, I went through a civil ceremony with Conte Graca; I refused to be married by a priest."

Miguel's face cleared a little.

"I must tell you that at that moment I had something of a vogue in Milan. I received many bouquets every night from a host of rakes, no one of whom I had ever countenanced and that must account for Gildo's infatuation. He wanted me because he could not have me. After we had lived together three or four weeks and he had shown me to the fast set of Milano, he forgot me. I lived very much alone, but—"

She stretched out her arms to their fullest extent, her little hands clenched, and raised her shoulders in a gesture of supreme complaisance. "I have gained what I wished; I met Signor Lorenzo and I am in a fair way to attain my end; he is between the upper and the nether grindstones, and the screw is in my hand."

CHAPTER XL.

Miguel was very tired. He settled himself comfortably in his chair and looked at Lorenzo, who had apparently been watching him for some time, and who immediately turned away and tried to appear unconcerned. Miguel rested his elbow on the arm of the chair, his hand partially covering his eyes. His lids were very heavy. He yawned and stretched his legs luxuriously, allowing them to remain extended. He thought it time for Pietro and De Waldis to return, and glanced lazily at the clock on Giulia's writing desk. It was twenty minutes to six.

Lorenzo moved uneasily, watching Miguel intently. He shifted his feet, making a slight noise, then he reached over to the table, purposely knocking a book to the floor, where it fell with a crash and lay face down, the leaves crumpled beneath. Miguel remained impassive, his breathing became deep and more regular. Lorenzo listened to it critically, and he looked about the room. On the tabouret beside the couch he had noted a long brass cutter. His eyes narrowed. Slowly he rose from his chair and, moving to the couch, sat down carefully, that he might make no noise. He ran his hand along the edge of the couch to the stand, his eyes intent on Miguel. He fumbled about amongst the clutter, and at last his fingers closed on the handle of the knife. He scarcely breathed as he took the cutter from the book of sonnets. It was too long to go in any of his pockets, so he quietly slipped it up his sleeve. He could feel the sharp point in the crook of his elbow, while the handle rested on his bent wrist beneath his cuff. His breath came with a hissing sound in great gasps. Summoning all of his

will, he forced himself to be quiet and looked about stealthily, simulating unconcern. After a little he rose from his seat, steadying himself with his right hand; he stepped towards Miguel. He paused and gripped the dagger firmly with his claw-like fingers, the point extended backward so that he might strike downward. He crept nearer and nearer until he stood within a few feet of Miguel, a baleful light shining from his malignant eyes and a triumphant grin parting his lips.

Miguel dropped his hand from his eyes and stared coldly at the crouched figure so near him. "Needs must when the devil drives," he said cynically. "I wondered if you had the courage."

Lorenzo remained crouched for a moment as though he still meant to spring; then the brass cutter fell from his nerveless fingers and he staggered back to the couch, choking with fear and rage.

Miguel allowed the dagger to remain where it lay, crossed his legs, again shaded his eyes with insulting indifference. The clock chimed six, and there was no other sound save the faint hum of the city throbbing indistinctly through the open window.

Giulia came from her room and admitted Pietro and De Waldis in response to their rap. They glanced at Lorenzo, who looked very sullen, and noted the brass knife on the floor. At seven Miguel and De Waldis went out to dine together, leaving Pietro in charge of the prisoner. Giulia came and went, collecting her belongings, which she was packing in preparation for her return to Milano. There was a quiet seriousness about her manner that was very pretty, and Lorenzo watched her eagerly; several times he opened his lips to speak, but it was nearly an hour later that he summoned sufficient courage to actually do so. As she passed near him he whispered, "Giulia," very timidly. She hesitated; then she stopped.

"Well?" she asked.

Pietro shrugged his shoulders indifferently; he was a little surprised, but then she was a woman, and consequently not to be depended on.

"Well?" she repeated impatiently.

"You are surely jesting, dear, when—"

"Jesting!" she laughed excitedly, "you choose your words well, signore."

"Do you mean you have thrown me over irrevocably?"

"Without the shadow of a doubt."

"Won't you be merciful?"

"Merciful, *Dio mio,* have you the assurance to ask me for mercy?" she laughed. "You do not understand yet, signore. What I have been to you, what I have given you was because of hate, not love. Ten years ago you killed my little half sister by a cruel persecution—the sweetest, the most lovable girl in the world. I married Gildo that I might become what I am to you, and punish you in my own way."

She curled her lip sarcastically and walked out of the room. Lorenzo bit his thumbnail nervously, thinking deeply the while. His sins had found him out at last. He hated Miguel with a painful intensity, but there was nothing left but to take him to Rosa. Giulia, he thought—well, he would survive her loss; there were other beautiful women left in the world. He would take pains when he was free of this business to buy the most beautiful one he could find in Milano and flaunt her before Giulia's very face.

What a piece of gossip he could circulate in the clubs and restaurants. Bah! the woman was a fool.

His self-possession returned in a large measure, so that Miguel found him in fairly good spirits when he returned with De Waldis. Giulia ordered dinner sent up for Lorenzo, and went down to the dining room with Pietro. When they returned there was but an hour remaining before their train left for Milano.

They drove to the station early, and the long return trip commenced. Miguel, De Waldis and Giulia occupied a compartment together, while Pietro and Lorenzo were in another. It was agreed that each of the men should spend a third of the trip with him, and relieve each other at regular intervals.

"I suppose you are my keeper," Lorenzo ventured after they had left Paris some distance behind.

"Something of the sort," Pietro replied without any interest in his tone.

Lorenzo watched him closely for a time from his corner, where he rode with his back to the engine, next a closed window.

After a considerable interval of quiet, Lorenzo broke the silence. "Money is a great thing," he said.

"You are a profound thinker." Pietro could be very aggravating on occasion.

"Are you wealthy?" Lorenzo asked bluntly.

"Yes, I have more than money can buy."

"What do you mean by that, signore?"

"I mean that I have my health and a clear conscience; two things you cannot buy with all your wealth. They are very necessary to happiness," he added.

"Have you money?" Lorenzo persisted, ignoring his answer.

"Yes."

"Much?"

"I think you are rather personal."

"I have a motive."

"Undoubtedly you would like to know how much I'm worth."

"No, beyond that."

"Indeed!" Pietro affected surprise, "perhaps you are a philanthropist?"

"I have my charities," Lorenzo said with complacence.

"Worthy ones, I hope."

"Is not all charity worthy?"

"By no means," Pietro replied with conviction, "and I am inclined to believe yours are not. I think you might be depended upon to receive full value for all you give—in—what shall we say—silence?"

"Signore!" Lorenzo flushed. "I do not understand."

"I will be more explicit; I am inclined to think when you give to the poor, you pay hush money."

"Signore, you insult me."

"Do I? It is a matter of no consequence."

"It is, sir, of consequence to me. I ask for an explanation."

"You shall have it. You pay hush money for moneys stolen, for girls ruined, for houses burned, for murders done."

Lorenzo turned livid and passed his hand over his trembling mouth.

"It is not so," he muttered.

"We will not argue it."

When De Waldis came to relieve Pietro at Chaumont he found Lorenzo crouched in his corner, his face set and gray.

CHAPTER XLI

The journey from Milano to Verona was very trying to them all. The heat in the compartment of the slow train they had been obliged to take had been great and the air was almost stifling with humidity. Upon arrival at the Stazione Porta Nuova, they drove immediately to the Fair Grounds where Lorenzo thought they might find Rosa, as he had received word from the head of this division of gypsies that the caravan to which she had been attached would remain there for some days.

Inquiry amongst the residents of the neighborhood developed the fact that a party of gypsies had been encamped there all through the horse-fair and had left only that morning. Where they were going no one seemed to know.

Miguel turned dejectedly away and walked back toward the town, followed by the others in silence. It was almost dusk, and the atmosphere was very oppressive, hanging in great clouds of vapor, with not a breath of air to stir the fetid mist, giving the neighboring buildings and trees the appearance of their own shadows. His clothing was wet and clammy from perspiration and dampness. As he reached the gate which had been the entrance to Paolo's camp, he was startled by a voice almost at his ear.

"*Buona sera,* signore," it said.

Miguel turned listlessly and looked into the face of a small boy perched on the topmost rail of a fence, his heels locked in the timber below, his little body bent forward to enable him to keep his balance. There was a suggestion of loneliness about the little chap, the moisture dimming the natural humor in his mis-

chievous eyes. Miguel looked him over critically from his dark curls to his dusty bare toes. There was an appeal for kindness, a wistful longing for someone to speak to, that Miguel found irresistible.

"*Buona sera,* my lad," he said finally. "Is it not time you were home?"

"Yes, signore," the boy replied rather doubtfully, and prepared to descend from his perch. "But I thought I'd come back and take another peep at the place, but it's not the same since they've gone."

"Who?" Miguel asked humoring him. Already he was beginning to lose interest and felt in his pockets abstractedly for a *soldo.*

"The gypsies," the boy answered proudly. "My friends!"

"Gypsies?" Miguel asked, interested at once.

"*Si,* signore. One was Paolo, the *padrone.* He beat my stepfather."

"What others were there?"

"Oh, the others were all there, too, Ramona, his wife, and Rosa—"

"Rosa?" Miguel asked eagerly.

"Yes, Rosa. She bought my donkey."

Miguel was dejected. Rosa, he thought, was in no position to buy anything, much less a donkey. It could not be the same.

"Was there a child, a little girl?" he asked as a last resort.

"Yes, Rosa. She sing like an angel and look like one, too."

"Tell me about her."

"I am," Dante said somewhat resentfully. "She bought my donkey."

"But what did she look like? How old was she? Did she seem happy?"

"I don't know how old she was," Dante continued judicially, "but she was about as big as me." He

drew himself up to his full height and cheated a little on his toes. "She may have been a little bigger, just a little," he added regretfully, but bound to be entirely truthful. "And she was happy, oh! yes. I never saw anyone who could laugh like her and Paolo and Ramona. They let her buy my donkey," he concluded, as though no further argument was necessary.

"Yes, presently," Miguel called to Pietro who was urging him to hurry.

"Did she wear a chain around her neck?" Miguel questioned.

"Yes, she did. It was pretty and had things like vines all over it. She showed it to me," he said proudly.

"*Dio* be thanked, there can be no doubt," Miguel muttered.

"What you say, *padrone?*"

"Nothing," Miguel answered. "Pietro, come here!"

"Now repeat to this gentleman what you have said to me," he said to Dante.

The boy was a little frightened and it took a deal of questioning before Pietro had the story as Miguel heard it.

"What do you think?" he asked when Dante had finished.

"There can be no doubt," Pietro said excitedly, "it is she."

"Where have they gone?" he asked Dante sharply.

Dante became suspicious and glanced doubtfully from Pietro to Miguel.

"What do you want them for?" he asked, backing away a little, prepared for flight.

"Come, boy, where have they gone?" Miguel asked impatiently, and jingled some coins in his hand. Dante took another step backward.

"I want to know why you want them first," he said doggedly. "They're my friends, you know."

"We mean them no harm," Pietro said kindly. "This is Rosa's father."

"You're not her stepfather, are you?" he asked suspiciously.

"No no, her real father."

"They're the only friends I ever had," he said thoughtfully, his eyes bright and his voice a little unsteady. "Do you swear by the Cross that you mean them no harm?"

"We swear we mean them only good, by the Mother of God and the Holy Ghost," Pietro said seriously, realizing the boy must be humored, but he would tell them nothing until Miguel repeated the oath also.

Then he came a little closer and said with an intensity very strange in a child of his years.

"If you lie to me, I hope God will strike you dead, and if he don't, I will."

"Well," said Miguel, "I hope He will. Where have they gone, for the love of the *buon Dio?* Be quick!"

"Not very far. Paolo told me they wouldn't go over twenty-five *kilos* to-day because the live stock was soft and I needn't worry about Vic. Vic's the donkey, he isn't very strong," he explained.

"In what direction?"

"On the road to Padova."

"We can find them inside of a few hours," Pietro said.

Miguel offered Dante a twenty-lire piece. He held back reluctantly.

"I don't want no pay," he said. "If it's good to them you mean, I'm satisfied; if it isn't, I wouldn't have it nohow."

"What's your name?" Miguel asked.

"They call me Dante."

"So will I. I'm your friend, Dante, Take it. You will hear from me again." He crushed the coin into the little hand and hurried off. Pietro explained

shortly to De Waldis and they went off rapidly in search of a conveyance.

"If we could only find an automobile," Pietro said as they hesitated at the Corso Vittorio Emanuel, uncertain where to go.

"We will find one," De Waldis said with his quiet air of determination.

"They are not very plentiful, I am afraid," Miguel said.

"There must be a garage in the town."

De Waldis crossed the street and inquired of a *guardia.*

"He doesn't know," he said disgustedly when he returned. "What is the best hotel?"

"The Grand Hotel de Londres et Royal Deux Tours is the best tourist hotel," Pietro said promptly. "We will go there. Where is it?"

"I don't know the street." Pietro called a *citadine,* and mentioned the name of the hotel.

When they arrived before the dingy entrance on a narrow dirty street, Miguel and Pietro remained with Lorenzo while De Waldis jumped out and sought the landlord.

There was one party stopping in the house who had arrived in an auto. He would do what he could to arrange it. He sent a porter to the gentleman's room begging the signore to grant him a few moments interview.

De Waldis strolled into the attractive palm garden at the rear where wicker tables and comfortable chairs were scattered about. The house had evidently been an old palace remodeled for hotel purposes and was extremely attractive in its arrangement and furnishings, a welcome contrast to the unpromising exterior.

In a few moments the proprietor returned and introduced the owner of the automobile, a fat, bustling little American, who continually used a big yellow

silk handkerchief to mop his shiny red face or smooth bald head which was fringed with thin gray hair. His twinkling merry eyes snapped with excitement at the thought of an adventure, and the corners of his mouth twitched in pleased anticipation.

"Yes, yes," he said, shaking hands. "Signor De Waldis? Well, well, this is odd."

"I am afraid, Signor Smeeth, I speak your English but poorly; perhaps you speak the Italian."

"My name's Smith," he laughed loudly, "and I speak English first, last and all the time. I have observed you people closely. I've been in Italy several weeks. You talk with your hands too much for me. I need mine for other purposes." He mopped his face, brow and head in a rapid series of nervous little dabs.

"I will do my best, Mister Smith," and De Waldis smiled his frank, contagious smile. Smith smiled back at him. "You're all right. I know a man as well as I ever get to know him at first glance. You're all right. I'll do anything I can for you within reason. So you want my automobile? What for?"

De Waldis told his story in a few expressive words, appealing to the proprietor from time to time for assistance in the difficult English. When he concluded, they both laughed a good deal and felt as though they had known each other a very long time.

"You can have it on two conditions. The first that you take me with you, and the second, that you do not tell my daughter."

"Certainly, signore," De Waldis said, "but, as I explained there are four in our party, and——"

"Oh, that's all right. She's a big one. Picks up seven and luggage without any trouble. When do you want to start?"

"My friends are without, awaiting your decision."

"My word," Smith laughed, "you talk English like a college professor."

"You are most kind, signore."

"Can it, can it," Smith cried.

"Pardon me, I do not quite understand."

"No, of course you don't. Can it is what we call a slang expression, and means in full, that I appreciate your gratitude but kindly do not mention it. We are usually in such a hurry at home that we have a shorthand method of expression as well as a shorthand style of writing."

"Ah, I understand, it is—ah—a code, is it not so?"

"Yes, that's it," Smith grinned and turned to the proprietor. "Send up to my room and get my goggles and cap—no, never mind—nothing's locked up against the infernal thieves," he muttered. Then he added aloud, "Telephone for my car to come around at once. I'll lay you two to one," he called to De Waldis, as he disappeared into the lift, "that my car's here before this infernal ice-wagon gets me to the second floor and back. Make it go! Make it go!" they heard him shouting to the elevator boy who grinned at him foolishly, understanding nothing but the lire he distributed in reckless generosity.

The proprietor looked at De Waldis, who leaned against a column and fanned himself with his hat. "*Sapristi!*" he said, and they both laughed.

Before he could really catch his breath Smith stood beside him. "Car come?" he asked. "No? I lose. Well, come on, we will meet it on the way. These your friends? Good! Jump into this cab and tell the driver to beat it." He jumped up on the box, and turned around, facing them. "You can introduce me later. I want to get away before my daughter gets back. Hey! landlord," he cried, "tell my daughter I won't be home till morning."

He waved his hand like a boy on the first day of

vacation, and laughed heartily. "My, I've got something on her this time."

"Hey, hey!" he shouted to the chauffeur swinging round a corner recklessly. "You confounded idiot, if I could get along without you I'd fire you in a minute." The car drew up to the curb and waited. "Come on," he called to the others, "jump in!" They transferred themselves from the cab to the automobile hurriedly, infected by his energy and good nature.

"Here," he called to Miguel, "you sit there beside the driver. She's your girl and your eyes will be the sharpest; it's going to be dark as Tophet." He placed Pietro and Lorenzo in the two middle seats, which were stationary and quite comfortable, and invited De Waldis to sit on the big rear seat beside himself. "We want to take the road to Padova, Charlie," he called to the chauffeur.

The car jerked forward, circled the Piazza Saint Anastasia and headed for the *corso* of the same name, which would take them past the hotel and through the Piazza Erbe.

"Hey! you pig-headed—" Smith half rose from his seat and shouted at Charlie, "my daughter's down that way looking at Juliet's castle. Find another way out." Charlie grinned good-naturedly and carefully picked a way through the crowded narrow streets.

"Well, I guess we're off now all right. Didn't lose much time did we?"

"No," smiled De Waldis.

"Well, 'what's the use,' is my motto. If you have got a thing to do, do it; get on the job. Now, let's see. The fellow in front is the girl's father; the one behind him is his friend, and a good chap, too, but who's the sour-looking party with the bilious skin?"

De Waldis explained.

"I see, he's the villain. Won't Dolly be mad!" he laughed delightedly.

"Dolly's my daughter—Miss Smith," he explained with an exaggerated air of seriousness. "This is our first trip over, and we're nosing around, looking for trouble and adventure. I bet Dolly five hundred dollars I'd have a bigger adventure than hers. She's ahead up to date—got rescued from drowning by a count at Lido, who wanted to marry her. I always thought it was a put-up job; she can swim like a duck, but never mind, I've got her now."

He was comparatively silent while going through the choked streets, and half rose from his seat as an urchin barely escaped the machine, or took in his breath through his teeth with a sharp hissing sound as the car stopped suddenly to avoid passing over a child or a dog sleeping in the narrow roadway. He swore mechanically at the chauffeur and the crowds at regular intervals, interspersing his oaths with quaint adjectives.

At last they rolled out into the open country, and with a sigh of relief he settled back on the comfortable cushions.

"Have rain before we get through," he observed, sniffing the heavy air critically. It was quite dark and Charlie stopped the car and lighted the lights in front and behind, the big acetylene lamps throwing two long streamers of pale light far ahead into the gathering gloom, lighting the stones in the road and accentuating the uneven spots with dark shadows. Gradually the mist grew thicker and the lights ceased to be a help, as they threw a huge curtain of light on the screen of fog before them, and shut off the ribbon of road beyond. Again the car stopped and Charlie turned out the big lamps, and a distant peal of thunder shook the heavy air.

"Better put up the top," Smith said.

CHAPTER XLII.

"Can't fool me on the weather much." Smith was fumbling at the side curtains, while the rain pattered a soft tattoo on the hood overhead. Charlie in rubber coat and hat came around on the outside of the car and made everything tight. "How far have we gone?" Smith asked him.

"Next town will be about twenty kilos."

"When you reach it, drive very slowly and keep a sharp lookout for wagons on the side of the road; we're looking for gypsies," he added laconically, enjoying the surprised look in the boy's face, dimly visible in the uncertain light.

"I guess that feased him," he whispered to De Waldis as the car started again. "He'll have something to tell the boys back in Yonkers," he chuckled.

"Is your home in Yonkers?" De Waldo asked politely, wishing to say something.

"What! Mine? I guess not. I live in New York, but Charlie's people live there, and I let him off once in awhile; he sends post-cards back to his friends every place we stop. I expect he'll ask me to raise his salary for stamps before a great while."

"Have you been on a long trip?"

"Well, not so long as regards time, but we've covered a good bit of ground from Paris to Budapest, and a lot of side-issues—Switzerland, Tyrol, the lakes. Going back through Germany."

"Indeed, how long has it taken you?"

"Six weeks."

"All that in six weeks?" De Waldis said incredulously.

"Sure! Ain't much use loitering, outside of the big ones and a few resorts; a day or so finishes the little ones. Take this town of Verona, for instance, we've given it two days. Why, we have wasted six hours here already. Dolly's fault and—Shakespeare's. Nice town, though. Where are you from?"

"Milano, signore."

"Nice city, Milano; visited the Cathedral; went through the treasury, and up on the roof—fine view; saw the 'Last Supper,' too; little dim, ain't it?"

"How long were you there?"

"Well, we were in a hurry just then; stayed over one day and two nights. You can do lots, though, in ten or twelve hours if you set out to do it. With autos, Baodeckers and guides we get along pretty lively."

"You should spend at least a month in Milano."

"If I did, I'd mildew. No offence."

They were running very slowly. Smith rubbed the dampness from a small pane of glass in the side curtains, and peeked out, squinting one eye and shading his face with his hands.

"This is the town, I guess; we're pretty near now. Shouldn't be surprised if we came up with them just yonder." He pointed ahead. They were running slowly through a quiet street paved with cobbles of unequal size. Plaster houses loomed ghostlike in the weird light of the lamps, which had been re-lighted. It looked dirty and unkempt about the gardens behind broken fences and scraggy trees.

"What's the name of this town, Charlie?" he shouted.

Charlie called something back, but Smith didn't catch it. However he pretended that he had and grunted; it didn't matter anyway, he thought. The car swerved to one side sharply, rose a little and

bumped back again. A long howl sounded behind them. Then it was very still.

"What was that?" Smith asked sharply. He stood up in the tonneau and leaned over Pietro's shoulder. "Couldn't help it, sir," Charlie said. "I saw him watching me out of the corner of his eye and sniffing in the grass. He grabbed the wheel so sudden I couldn't turn out."

"How often have I warned you about killing dogs?"

"I know, sir, but I couldn't help it. He's dead all right. Went clean over his skull."

Smith sat down quietly. "Can't help it, sometimes," he explained to De Waldis. "Hate to do it; but I'd rather kill them outright than maim them."

The rain came down in torrents, beating on the canvas top with a continuous roar; the chug of the motor sounded pleasantly to their strained ears. Steam rose in little clouds from the radiator roof, and the road unfolded slowly before them, a yellow strip of mud fading into the gloom beyond, bordered by scraggy bushes and weeds and trees whose trunks, black and dripping, gleamed momentarily as they passed. The surrounding country was very bare and open. Miguel leaned forward in his seat eager to catch a glimpse of the gypsy caravan.

The others were nervous and expectant and watched the road persistently.

"My, won't Dolly be mad!" Smith chuckled.

"If it were not for the child, I'd be having the time of my life. I love to ride at night in the rain."

"Yes," said De Waldis, "so do I."

"I knew it," Smith said genially. "I know what you like and what you don't like, just as though I'd known you for years."

"Quite remarkable," De Waldis replied.

"Natural to me, and a good asset. The ability to

size your man at a glance has made a lot of money for me; shown me where to put my confidence and where to withhold it. I don't mind telling you I've got my pile, though I hate a man who boasts about his money. That reminds me, I met a big Wisenheimer once in a broker's office who could do more of that than anyone I ever knew. To listen to him, he was the greatest financier this side of Hades; knew all about credits and exchange and economic conditions and investments and crops, and used to lose about fifty thousand dollars of his wife's money every year —good American ninety-nine per cent. silver dollars, too, not these little toy francs and lires."

De Waldis laughed.

"Guess you know the kind, too. They never seem to get wise to themselves. They tell you how they made half a million, but neglect to mention the fact that they let it get away, and a lot more with it, and that their wives gave them hell.

"There's another kind in that game, too, as long as we are on the subject—the dapper little manager who gets a salary according to the profits he can make for his firm, and dresses like a show window. It's his business to get the commissions. His friend, who owns a little cigar store on the avenue, or shaves the neighbors in some basement, looks over his statement; all he gets when he's stopped out, and figures that if he hadn't had to pay commissions he would have had three thousand for his one, and goes back to work to save another bundle."

They were running through a thick grove of white birch and cedar, when Miguel raised his hand and rose from his seat. "Stop!" he shouted. De Waldis repeated it in English; the car ran on a few paces and stopped.

Miguel jumped out and ran back along the shiny,

sticky road. Pietro hastened to follow him. De Waldis remained in the car with Lorenzo. Smith hesitated, looking from De Waldis to the hurrying figures disappearing up the road.

"Well, I guess we have arrived. What can I do?" he asked excitedly. The yellow handkerchief was in operation again, although it was rather chilly in the damp night air.

De Waldis recognized the curiosity that consumed him and its cause. "Why not back the car?" he suggested.

"First rate! Back her up, Charlie!"

They arrived at a bridge of rough boards thrown across the ditch in time to see Miguel and Pietro enter a lane between the close grown trees and walk rapidly toward two wagons backed to one side and facing the tents, which were pitched under the thick foliage, where they were somewhat sheltered from the driving rain.

They saw Pietro kicking violently from side to side, while Miguel leaned down and patted something which bounded around him like white lightning. There was a great yelping and barking. A horse whinnied from a little farther on in the grove.

Smith clutched De Waldis by the wrist. "What was that?" he whispered. A long, melancholy wail floated off into the night, followed by a series of short, sharp brays.

"That would be the donkey"; De Waldis smiled.

"Pshaw! Thought it was a jackal at least."

"Well, it is rather nerve racking," De Waldis apologized. "You can make it is dramatic as you like when you tell the story."

"Yes," Smith said doubtfully; but I wish you hadn't told me; are you sure it is a donkey?"

"I am afraid there is no doubt about it."

"Well," Smith's face lighted up. "What's the Italian for jackass?"

"*Ciucio.*"

"That's better." He laughed contentedly. "Perhaps I can't string them at home with that, eh?" He slapped De Waldis on the shoulder.

A head appeared between the flaps of one of the tents. "Down Cyrano! Down Duca! down—come back here both of you. Who is it? What do you want?" It was Paolo's voice.

"I am Miguel Rappold, and I have come for my daughter."

The door of one of the wagons opened and a little white robed figure bounded across the wet turf and hurled itself at Miguel.

"*Padre, padre,* is it really you? I am so glad."

"Rosa, my Rosa," Miguel whispered and clasped the tiny form in his arms. She clung to him and cried happily, but very quietly. Miguel stood stolidly, straining her to him and looking at the tents, which seemed very dim and far off.

Smith turned away and mopped his face rapidly. "Whew! awful warm, isn't it?" he said. Lorenzo said nothing, but turned up his coat collar in silent protest.

A few minutes later, when Rosa and Ramona had dressed, Miguel stood with his back to the door of one of the wagons and faced the gypsies. His eyes blazed in anger and his words crowded one upon the other in bitter denunciation. Ramona stood boldly before him and calmly denied his accusations and defended herself and Paolo, who stood proud and erect, his arms folded. "It is not so," Ramona cried. "We did not know." Miguel smiled superciliously in unbelief.

"You believe me, don't you?" Ramona knelt at Rosa's feet and looked at her anxiously.

Rosa placed her soft little hands, one on each side of Ramona's face, leaned forward and kissed her on the mouth.

"Of course, I do, and I love you very, very much." The tears rushed to Ramona's eyes and she crushed Rosa to her heart in a gust of wild longing to keep her always and love her. Then she turned and faced Miguel. "I care for nothing you may say, now. You heard what she said. We are a kingdom without an empire. We have our laws, our rulers whom we obey blindly; we are more obedient than the peoples of any country in the world who live in one place all their lives, on farms or in the cities, for we are a detachment of a great army which is always on the march, and discipline is essential to the welfare of the whole; our wanderings hither and thither over the face of Europe are not aimless, as they seem to you, but systematized and directed by wise orders from our leaders without which we would soon conflict and gather in unwieldy groups too big for a single community to support. If we have wronged you and Rosa we did so unconsciously, and we are sorry, but when Marsala came to us with the sign and told us to take her for the Romany race, we did so, believing it was for the welfare of our nation, and with the full consent of her father, as we were led to suppose. We have treated her well, given her the best we had, and learned to love her dearly." Ramona rose to her feet. "We now return her to you with great sorrow at our loss, but content in the knowledge of her happiness. You will find her none the worse for her contact with us, and I am sure that in the years to come, when the bitterness has worn away, you will think of us more kindly than you do to-night; talk with her; let her tell you of her life with us, and you will find that she has been happy. No child can be hurt by a

woman's love, even though that woman be of Bohemia."

As Miguel listened the anger faded from his face, his tense muscles relaxed.

"Forgive me," he said, "I believe you, and ask your pardon for my unjust accusations; perhaps you can find pity in your hearts for the father who lost his daughter, all that remained to him after years of persecution, which has left him, stripped of his fortune, of his profession, of his wife."

"There," he turned to Paolo and extended his hand. "Forgive me and count me your friend. I withdraw my words."

They clasped hands and looked into each other's eyes with mutual respect and good feeling.

"Come, *mia cara;* we must be off. The others are impatient out there in the rain." He looked about the wagon in which they had been talking and was surprised at its comfort and homely atmosphere. Two wide bunks with clean bedding had been let down from the walls, one of which had been Rosa's, while the other with the folding cradle near it was Ramona's. There were three windows with glass panes and wooden frames that opened and closed like the windows of a house to give air and light and a door that led to the driver's seat, a veritable balcony to the pleasant room. Wild flowers were scattered about here and there in swinging vases and bowls, while a brass lamp hung suspended by chains from the centre of the roof; in one corner there was a tiny stove, with a crooked pipe leading through the roof; in another a cupboard where Miguel fancied the dishes and cooking utensils might be kept; the floors were covered with bright rugs, the clean varnished boards showing between.

"Good-bye, *carissima.* Think of me once in awhile,

won't you?" Ramona said, as Rosa clung to her.

"I shall never forget you, Ramona, *mia piccola madre*. Some day you and Paolo will come and see me, won't you?"

"What will the *padre* say?"

"Oh, he will be glad. Promise me!"

"I promise."

"Good-bye, little sweetheart, good-bye!" Paolo swung her up and kissed her. "Remember the poor gypsies sometimes."

"Oh, I will, I will," she sobbed. Rosa looked at Ramona with streaming eyes, and threw her arms about her in a last embrace. Miguel took her hand and gently led her from the wagon into the storm.

When they had gone, Ramona looked about the room. A few suggestions of Rosa remained; her little dress hung on a peg in the wall, its gay colors and bright spangles mocking her sombre thoughts; the tambourine with which she had shaken the coppers so gayly from the pockets of the crowds lay beneath it on the floor; a vase full of Fall flowers which she had gathered that afternoon breathed a soft perfume, suggestive of her sweet laughing face. The pictures of the Madonna and Saviour hung in its place by her bed. Rosa had forgotten it, the little treasure she had valued to highly. Romona snatched it from the wall and rushed to the door. The chug of the motor hummed in her ears; it rattled and spluttered for a moment like a volley of distant rifle shot. Ramona ran out in the driving rain. "Rosa! Rosa!" she shouted; the hum of the motor grew less distinct and gradually faded beyoud the hill and ceased. Ramona stood looking after it, the rain beating upon her face and drenching her thin gorments. When she could no longer hear it, she went back into the wagon, hung the picture in its accustomed place, and, kneeling before it whispered a fervent prayer.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Smith immediately took command of the little company. He placed Miguel and Pietro on the rear seat, with Rosa between them and Cyrano at their feet. They were all very happy in the hooded and curtained tonneau. De Waldis sat beside Lorenzo, while Smith himself rode in front with Charlie. The fog had blown away and although it still rained heavily, the road was visible a considerable distance ahead and they were able to make good speed.

Smith was in fine spirits; he smiled when they splashed through standing water and sent the spray to the fence rails; he laughed delightedly as they bumped into some hole or rut and were half thrown from their seats.

He chuckled when he thought of Dolly, which was nearly all the time. "Great, ain't it?" he asked Charlie repeatedly.

Rosa paid very little attention to anything or any one but *padre* and Uncle Pietro. She chatted first with one, then with the other, asking innumerable questions of home and of friends; she was very tired and leaned heavily against Miguel, squeezing Pietro's hand from time to time.

"Isn't it wonderful?" she asked.

"It is indeed, *carissima;* for a time we despaired of ever finding you," Miguel said.

"I knew you would, though." Rosa wriggled a little tighter between them. "I love Ramona and Paolo, but I am so glad to be back with you," she whispered. "I knew you would be worried, but every night when I went to bed I told myself that you would come in the morning and then when you did not come that

day, I would say they will come to-morrow. And here you are. You see, it did come true at last. I knew it would, and the poor signora—I wish I could hug her, too."

"She will be glad to see you, Rosa," Pietro said.

"Yes, and I shall be glad to see her; how are the chickens," she giggled, "do you remember?"

They laughed at that.

"She has improved on the old way of catching the birds," Pietro said. "She bores a little hole through a kernel of corn and ties a long string to it, then throws it with a panful of the grain for the birds to eat; the one who gets the kernel with the string is it, then she winds him in and it's all over. I must give her a pole and reel," he said, thoughtfully, "it would simplify matters still further."

Rosa looked at him rather suspiciously, but said nothing.

Cyrano put his paws in Rosa's lap and licked first Miguel's hand, then Pietro's.

"Dear dog," Rosa said, patting him lovingly. "He has been so nice; how do you suppose he ever found me, *padre?*"

"Instinct and a brave heart," Miguel answered.

"And great love," Pietro added.

"Devotion and courage," Miguel laughed. "If we named over all the virtues, there would be too few to explain it."

The car skidded badly around a turn, righted itself and went on evenly.

"Think you're in a skating rink?" Smith asked.

Charlie laughed; he was used to the "old man," as he called him out of his hearing, and didn't mind.

De Waldis turned in his seat.

"Secrets?" he asked, smiling.

"No, no," Miguel hastened to assure him.

"Then I should like to make the little lady's acquaintance."

"By all means," Miguel said. "This, Rosa, is Signor De Waldis, the gentleman who made it possible for us to find you. He has become our very dear friend."

Rosa placed her little hand in his for a moment, and looked shyly at his face, a white blur in the dark, but she liked his voice.

"You have had quite an unusual experience," De Waldis said. "Do you think the gypsies were really ignorant of the true situation?"

"Oh, yes," Rosa said loyally, eager to defend her friends.

"Did you never tell them, never talk with them about it?"

"No, never. You see, Paolo told me I was ungrateful once when I tried to, and it made me sorry, so I never spoke of it again; they were so kind, I didn't want to hurt them, and then I knew the *padre* would come."

"How did you know that?"

"I don't know. I knew he would look until he found me."

"You are a little heroine, a very brave little girl."

"Oh, no, I was very much afraid at first, and then when I found there was nothing to be afraid of, it was very easy."

"Won't you tell us a little of your experience? I am very curious."

Rosa began shyly, and told them how she was taken away in the covered cart, but when she reached the point in her story where she became a street singer her eyes sparkled, and she rattled on eagerly. Suddenly she cried, "Oh, *padre,* I have forgotten my picture, the dear little Madonna and the Saviour. Can't we go back?"

"I am afraid not, *mia cara*. You see, this is Signor Smith's car, and we have already imposed upon him a great deal, but we will recover it, Rosa, do not worry."

"I wish I could have Vittoria Emanuele, too." Then she told them about Dante and the donkey. There was hardly time for the tale, and Rosa finished it rapidly as they drew up before the hotel.

Smith jumped out of the car and was immediately pounced upon by a slip of a girl about eighteen years old, bareheaded and excited. Her soft blonde hair in pretty disorder, blew across her laughing, mischievous eyes; she brushed it away impatiently with a little white hand, two or three brilliant rings on the fingers.

"Where have you been, dad?" she said severely, her pretty eyes dancing.

"Oh, just a little rescue," Smith said unconcernedly, making a play of shaking her off.

"Tell me, at once," she said, holding his sleeve.

"Don't bother me, Dolly, can't you see the little princess is greatly overcome by shock and fatigue?"

"The princess?" Dolly's mouth stood open in amazement. Then she looked suspiciously at her father, and perceiving his quizzical expression, beat him gently about the shoulders. "You are an old fraud," she said.

Smith was fully occupied in helping the others out, and ignored her when they were all gathered in the hotel corridor, the centre of considerable observation by the other guests.

Dolly whispered in Smith's ear. "Now, honest injun! Dad, is she a princess?"

"Why, of course," Smith began, but Dolly raised his chin with her finger and made him look in her eyes. "Well, if she ain't, she ought to be," he concluded lamely.

"There, I knew it."

"Gentlemen, this is my daughter," Smith said with just pride, "and this, Dolly," he held Rosa's hand, "is the young lady who was stolen by the brigands and gallantly rescued after a hard fight. My, you should have heard the *ciucio* howl! It curdled the blood in our veins," and he winked at De Waldis.

Dolly was very busy petting Rosa, whom she treated very much as she would have handled a mechanical doll.

"Signor Smith," De Waldis said, "you can never know our appreciation of your kindness, but as we have had scarcely any sleep for two nights and are completely worn out, if you will excuse us—"

"Certainly, certainly," Smith said, jovially, "tonight you are my guests. Go to your rooms. I have ordered a little snack sent up; then go to bed, and pleasant dreams."

He shook hands with them all but Lorenzo, who stood a little apart and looked very black and ugly, his chin sunk forward, his hat pulled low over his eyes.

De Waldis grasped Smith's hand again. "We will see you in the morning, my friend. I but poorly express the gratitude of my friends, who would gladly do so for themselves could they speak your language."

Rosa stood on tiptoes and kissed the kind old gentleman on the cheek. He turned very red and looked very proud. Dolly touched him on the arm. "Who is that?" and she pointed at Lorenzo.

"That, my dear, is the meanest man in Italy, which is saying a good deal."

"I leave it to you, signore," De Waldis called as he stepped into the lift, "to tell the story of our adventure."

"Trust me," Smith laughed.

Some time later Dolly came from the palm room, led the proprietor to a secluded corner and asked in a mysterious whisper, "Signore, can you tell me what a *ciucio* is?"

CHAPTER XLIV

"Back again, eh?" Gildo asked, looking about the room a little vacantly. "Why didn't you telegraph?"

"I don't know," Giulia answered dully. She sat down and settled in her chair as though completely exhausted.

"You might have known that I would have some kind of an engagement. You didn't imagine that I was sitting home evenings alone, did you?" His tone was very peevish, and his words had an aggravating way of running up into high notes at the end of a sentence. Each syllable pounded on Giulia's brain; her nerves vibrated like the strings of a zither when struck by a bungling beginner. She sighed and moved impatiently.

"Did you?" Gildo insisted, assuming his favorite attitude, which he considered very impressive and terrifying, his weak chin thrust out, his receding forehead wrinkled, and a supercilious smile contorting his thick lips.

"I don't think that I thought of it at all," Giulia said indifferently.

"Bah!" Gildo yanked viciously at the white evening tie he had been attempting to arrange to his satisfaction for some time. It tore in two pieces with a short ripping sound. He looked ruefully at the half remaining in his hand for a moment, then threw it on the floor. Giulia watched him unfasten his collar, tear it in narrow strips and stamp off in a rage to his own room. Even after he slammed the door she could hear him swearing and throwing things about in a fury.

"He seems glad to see me." She laughed a little

bitterly. She rose slowly as though her limbs were stiff and sore, and began mechanically to move about the pretty rooms, sorting her belongings, throwing certain elaborate dresses and garments to one side as too gay for future requirements; the others, street garments, and more sober articles, she placed in another pile for her maid to pack.

"What in the world are you doing?" Gildo looked in, then entered the room again.

"I'm preparing to pack."

"Mad?"

"No."

"Well, what the devil ails you?"

"Nothing."

"Are you going away because I have an engagement?"

"No."

"Where are you going?"

"Back to my husband."

"Ten thousand devils! The woman's out of her mind!" Gildo dropped into a chair and gazed at her fearfully.

Giulia arranged herself comfortably facing him. She had never looked better than she did at that moment. Gildo stared at her in open-mouthed admiration, tinged with pity. Could it be possible that one so young, so beautiful, could go mad? It did not seem right.

Giulia interrupted his reverie.

"You will be glad, Gildo," she said. "You have never really cared for me. You have always been a little ashamed of me, never quite believing that I filled the social position you gave me. You married me because I was sought after by all your set, and marriage was the only way to gain me, but I give you back your freedom. I had a husband living when I became your wife. For a long time you have pos-

sessed *'La Belle Guilia.'* I quote the wits of that day," she smiled pensively, "and now you may return openly to the life you have been leading secretly."

Gildo's little brain reeled, unable to grasp the meaning so plainly expressed by her words.

"What do you mean, Giulia?"

"I mean what I say. You are free, I have never been your wife."

"Dio!" Gildo had often wished for his freedom, often cursed the crazy folly that had tempted him to marry the pretty actress. He was free; he was glad, but, then on the other hand, he had grown very fond of her; he realized he would be very lonely. What would it mean to come home to the apartment, quiet and deserted, each room a reminder of her, the most beautiful woman of his acquaintance? *Dio!* how often had he caught himself wondering at the thought of how he could love her had she belonged to another, and all the years this had been so and he had not known it. He rose, crossed the room and attempted to take her hands. She pushed him away coldly.

"I know what you mean, Gildo," she said. "You are depraved. Honest love is a bore, wrongful liaison a pleasure. We have been together less than two years and you lost all interest in me in as many weeks. But believe me, I was glad. I do not reproach you for that. You will no doubt wonder at the reasons that prompted me to do as I have done, and I think I owe it to you to explain."

Gildo threw himself on his knees and buried his face in his arms, resting on her chair.

"Don't leave me, Giulia. I have been careless, selfish. I will be good." He cried like a child, his overtaxed nerves broken by a wave of self-pity, an overpowering sense of desolation. True, he had never

loved Giulia, but he himself was unloved and he realized that no one of his acquaintances cared whether he came or went save as they derived fleeting entertainment from his prodigality. Of all the world hers was the only smile he had grown to know and to trust.

"Listen to me, Gildo," Giulia said kindly, resting her hands lightly on his heaving shoulders. "I have never been happy. When I was very young I ran away with a Frenchman, a forger. We had a child after a time; he married me. The child died. He is in prison now for a crime he did not commit. Two years ago he sent me the details of my little half-sister's death. She was the only one in the world I cared for, and her death almost broke my heart. When I learned of the beast that spoiled her life and drove her to her grave, I swore that I would be revenged. This, as it seemed to me, was only possible by coming to know him. Therefore, I submitted to a lying marriage with you that I might meet him on equal ground and learn to know him. I have done that. I wormed a way into his confidence; I learned his secret. To-morrow he goes forth into the world alone, broken in health, penniless, the slave of a deadly drug. Can you imagine his punishment? I have done this and I am glad. The position you gave me enabled me to do it. If you consider yourself poorly paid it is your own fault. I was reconciled to live with you as your wife until I accomplished my purpose; it is the end."

"Stay with me, Giulia," Gildo begged, "I cannot get along without you."

"It is impossible," Giulia said firmly. "Whatever else he may be, he is my husband. It will be my penance to serve him. I shall take nothing with me. I give you back the jewels you have given me. One

or two trinkets that belong to me I shall sell, and with that we shall start our lives again. Happiness is not for either of us. We shall be very poor; perhaps that will be the hardest to bear. After the past two years of luxury, I shall find poverty very hard, but still I shall know that as I have sinned I am serving my punishment. Gildo, I have grown very fond of you in a way. I do not love you, but I shall always have an interest in your welfare. Give up your present way of living. Marry some good woman and settle down; in a very short time you will ruin your health, and then it will be too late."

Gildo watched her dejectedly as she fluttered about the apartment collecting her little belongings, the trivial things that she counted as really belonging to herself, and piled them in a heap on the dainty bed. At last she came to him and held out her jewel box.

"They are all there, Gildo. Save them for the good woman, won't you?"

He pushed them away. "Keep them," he sobbed.

"I can't, dear. Won't you see, I must pay the penalty of my sin. I must expiate my crime."

"No, no, you can't live in poverty."

"I must." Giulia was moved by his evident sincerity and turned away.

"Giulia, what is the use? I will see that he is well taken care of. I will settle an income on you. You can take care of him yourself." He looked up brightly.

She shook her head.

"But, Giulia, think; it means comfort, life to you both. You say he is ill?"

"Mortally ill."

"Then why throw away your life, your happiness, on a dying man?"

"No, he needs me. It is the only way. I could

never be content to know that I have done what I have without bearing my punishment. I foresaw it all before I undertook my task and this, the expiation, is as much a part of my plan as my revenge." She straightened and smiled. "I am content."

"Who is he?" Gildo whispered.

"Salvador Lorenzo."

"*Mio Dio!* I thought so."

A knock sounded on the door.

"Come in," Giulia called.

Sophia came in and handed Giulia a telegram. She read it over twice and handed it to Gildo.

"He is dead," he said in a dazed way.

Giulia nodded her head and resumed her work. Gildo walked up behind her and took her in his arms.

"Our ways are the same now," he said.

She did not struggle,

"We will run away to some quiet little place and be married all over again." He kissed her passionately on her warm lips. Still holding her with one arm he reached for the jewel-box and forced it into her hands. "I have found her—" he said, "the good woman."

CHAPTER XLV.

Rosa was blessed with a keen delight in the beautiful. She gloried in the sunlit day, the after glow, the gathering dusk of evening; she reveled in the weird half lights and grotesque shadows cast by the mystical moon, in the black nights when wind and rain shrieked through the forest and lashed the lake to fury. She loved the hills, the streams, the meadows, the ever-changing sky with its glorious cloud pictures of moving armies, bristling with cruel spears and mounted upon prancing, champing steeds, its walled cities with towering battlements and domed cathedrals.

She sat on her favorite boulder under the huge oak overlooking Como, and thought of that other day, but a few weeks gone, when she had climbed the hill barefooted and unhappy, hurt by the taunts of her schoolmates. It seemed very far in the past, indeed, so much had happened since. She looked off over the valley at the sloping red roofs plainly indicating the course of the narrow crooked streets; at the tall spires; at the azure lake, like a piece of fallen sky; at the green hills, huge uncut emeralds with deep shadows between. The air was very clear, and the distant snow peaks looked very near and slightly flushed with pink; but the lake, the sky, the shadows on hill and on snow mountain, all were blue.

"The Madonna's favorite color. The world is doing penance," Rosa mused and smiled at the fancy.

Cyrano lay stretched at her feet, delightfully content. When she spoke he raised his head and looked at her curiously as though he half believed he had been told to do something; then, satisfied that nothing was re-

quired of him, he lay down again and dozed. Rosa watched him for awhile. Then she pulled a long blade of plumed grass and tickled his ear; the puppy twitched once or twice, then opened one eye and looked at her suspiciously. Rosa laughed and threw herself beside him on the sweet-smelling grass.

"Good old dog," she laughed. "I am a bad girl to tease you." Cyrano wagged his tail, crawled close beside her and went to sleep again.

"My! you must be tired to sleep so much," Rosa smiled, stroking him gently, "but then I suppose you slept with one eye open all the time we were away, and you are trying to catch up."

After *cena* that evening they walked down to the gate in the soft twilight. Pietro had come up from Como with a letter for Miguel from De Waldis, which contained a check from the insurance company in settlement of his claim against Lorenzo for the burned houses, and the signora had consented for the first time in her life to let her dishes go over until the morning. They were all very happy and contented, but quiet withal. Suddenly Rosa held up her hand and turned her head sidewise.

"Listen!" she said. After a moment she added excitedly, "It is our bell, *padre,* our bell." She pushed open the gate and ran out upon the dusty road. A faint tinkle came to them from the valley below. They all followed, and shading their eyes with their hands, looked down the hill. A small boy urged a smaller donkey up the steep ascent, running beside him in sheer delight; the donkey switched his tasseled tail and wagged his moth-eaten ears with exasperating unconcern, but maintained his slow, walk without interruption. A little way behind, two horses strained at a van-like wagon, on the seat of which they could plainly see Ramona's yellow headdress and Paolo's crimson sash.

Rosa made a trumpet of her hands and shouted a long "Helloa!" but they were too far away to hear, and continued to climb up slowly. A faint breeze rustled the leaves overhead, just beginning to turn yellow and crimson and gold, and swayed the tall trees so that they seemed to lean forward and whisper to each other, then settle back and laugh delightedly at their own humor. Rosa saw and understood; she fancied they were amused at Dante and the donkey, and she laughed, too.

The little fellow saw Rosa first; he raised his broken hat and waved it joyously; the donkey snatched a succulent tuft of grass from the roadside and moved a little slower than before. Then they saw Ramona and Paolo jump from the wagon, one on either side, and wave their arms in greeting. Rosa ran off to meet them.

They had separated from Gian after a quarrel about Rosa. It developed that he had known the circumstances of the kidnapping all along. Dante was a part of the caravan now, Paolo having bought him from his stepfather with his mother's consent.

They stood in a group at the gate, asking and answering in the same breath. Finally, when all had been told, little Dante took advantage of the pause in the conversation. He touched Rosa with a pudgy thumb and pointed at Ramona.

"She's a see-er," he whispered mysteriously.

Ramona overheard and laughingly explained to Miguel that there was little doubt but that she had the gift of second sight; they had experimented frequently of late, and each time successfully.

The signora, who had watched the gypsies suspiciously, finally suggested they must be hungry, and insisted they come in to supper, from which it might be inferred that she had been completely won by Ramona's pretty face, or Paolo's confident smile, or Dante's mischievous eyes, or perhaps all three.

As they went in, Rosa and Dante stood beside Vittorio Emanuele a minute, pulling his long ears and laughing at his pensive expression.

"He's *bello,* all right, and he'll have a nice home here," Dante said, a little wistfully.

"He'll have a better one with you Dante," Rosa said. "I have no place to keep him, and you love him best, anyway, so I'll give him back to you."

"Honest?"

"Honest."

Dante said nothing, but his gratitude was quite evident in his smiling face and shining eyes.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Lorenzo slipped from the shadow of the insurance building and walked rapidly across the Piazza del Duomo. Strange, curling images seemed to crawl and squirm before his eyes; objects near at hand were blurred and indistinct, while the more distant cathedral stood out a vivid glare of white light. He was tortured by dull pains extending from his brows over the crown of his head to the base of his brain. He pulled his hat over his eyes and neither saw nor heard the angry looks or sharp words of those he jostled at almost every step. He stretched out his hands involuntarily as though blind and groping in darkness. With a sudden realization of the spectacle he was making of himself he forced his hands to his sides, held his elbows stiffly and, clenching his teeth, strained his eyes, resolved to see clearly. Gradually objects near at hand resumed their natural appearance. He felt the need of stimulant—"Brandy, brandy!" he muttered. The words beat in his brain; he hesitated before the Café Biffi and passed on; he would go to some place where there was less chance of being recognized. He turned down the Via Filodrammatica, passed two cafés slowly, afraid to enter. He dared not speak to a living man; he resented the casual glance of every passer-by. What were they looking at? Surely he had not changed. Could the evil of his life be written on his face? He fancied people turned aside and shrank from him. He must have a drink and a glimpse of himself in some glass. He hesitated before a third café and passed on—there were too many people; he would find one less crowded. Suddenly he fancied he could not speak; a cold perspiration broke out all over his body. When he reached a

comparatively open space he whispered the word, "brandy, brandy," over and over, just above his breath, as though he feared he might forget. At last he darted into a dirty, evil-smelling place. In a moment he gulped half a tumbler of fiery liquid and went on again. All that afternoon he rushed on furiously here, there, anywhere, eagerly trying to elude the agony in his soul. Often he stopped in some poor *tratori,* gulped his liquor and went on again. Dusk found him within a block of the home which he had once occupied, now returned to its rightful owners. The side door and his study he believed were still accessible to him. He realized it was too light to attempt an entrance, so he set himself a task. He would walk to the Amfiteatro and back; then it would be dusk. He started resolutely, keeping to the unfrequented streets. At every corner he was obliged to force himself to go on. At length he reached his goal, and almost ran the entire distance back to the Palace. He found his way in cautiously, went to his study, changed to the Hunchback and came out again, with a feeling of great relief. No one could recognize him now as Lorenzo the——, he dared not put a name to his character.

At the "Silver Heron" the same callous men, the same lewd women drank the same evil liquor and smoked the same rank tobacco; the same lights swung slowly to and fro as the street door opened and closed, throwing dark shadows fitfully upon the sanded floor. The little door at the rear opened to the signal as before, admitting the lost to the hell beyond.

The She-wolf bullied her patrons persistently, but absent-mindedly. The old timers exchanged knowing glances and often slipped away without paying their scores, and whispered together of her failing faculties. It was generally believed that her days were numbered.

Tano crouched over his table in a distant corner, his bloodshot eyes eternally watching the street door, his nervous hands constantly moving in restless unquiet, clutching the edge of the table, only to release it at once as though it burned his flesh the next, drumming with his fingers upon the board, then clasping and unclasping his hands as though testing his strength.

He watched many people enter from the street with little interest; suddenly twin fiends appeared in the depths of his narrowed eyes, his muscles grew tense and rigid. He vainly tried to swallow the lump in his throat, which pained him desperately; he turned his head slowly, following the Hunchback's progress through the crowded room. An ominous silence spread like a clammy fog bank over treacherous shoals. Many stole slinking glances at their nearest neighbors, pushed back their chairs and slouched away. Two men playing dominoes looked up and about the deserted room, hastily pulled their hats over their eyes and went out. The Hunchback stood before the bar and looked at the She-wolf silently, a great fear gradually growing in his weary eyes.

Tano rose; they were alone save for a besotted toper who lay huddled over his table. Tano shook him roughly. "Get out," he said. The poor knave looked at him, read the message he saw in his drawn face and shuffled away, crossing himself in terror. Tano bolted the door behind him and faced the Hunchback.

"You have come back," he laughed.

"Yes," Lorenzo whispered. "What does this mean? Why have they all gone?"

Tano looked about the dreary room and grinned. "They did not wish to spoil our meeting; they know I have waited many nights."

Lorenzo realized his meaning, and felt his danger. The place seemed to reek of death and violence; the stagnant air hung heavy as though about to shut down upon some horrid hole forever. He looked at the She-wolf and cringed before her hate-laden stare; there was a cold threat in the silence which caused him to tremble in every limb and break out in a cold sweat.

"Have a drink?" The words came to him as from a great distance. He reached blindly for the bottle and poured a tumbler of brandy, wondering stupidly why they rang so many bells. He gulped the fiery liquid and gratefully felt the blood rush, warm, through his veins.

"Have another?"

"No!" Lorenzo looked at Tano curiously.

"Better; it's your last."

"What?"

"You won't find it where you're going."

"Where is that?" The Hunchback's voice trembled.

"Surely, you do not hope for Paradise?"

The She-wolf laughed.

Lorenzo stepped back a pace.

"More likely the Inferno," Tano concluded.

"You would murder me?"

"Oh, no; I am going to give you a chance, such a chance as you gave the woman and her child. Watch him, She-wolf, I must go for something. If you let him escape I'll tear out your tongue and gouge your eyes." He glanced at her savagely.

"Don't threaten me," she hissed, and raised her cruel red hand, which clutched a thick club loaded with lead. "I'll keep him." Lorenzo shrank still further from the pair.

"Stay where you are," Tano commanded. "I will return presently." He went out by the little door at the rear; the Hunchback and the She-wolf exchanged

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SHE WATCHED THEM WITH BURNING, VINDICTIVE EYES.—*Page* 287.

glances. Lorenzo knew it was useless to plead. Money alone could save him and he had scarcely two soldi to rub one against the other. He sank into a chair and covered his face with his hands to hide his fear.

"The greatest in the Provinces!" the She-wolf mused. "Do you remember you called me *lupa manara* that night in your nasty, sarcastic, heathenish way. I swore then to get you, Hunchback, and I guess you're about done. What is it?" she affected concern in her tone. "Not thinking, are ye? Thought is meant for fools, you said once. If that's the case, you ought to be thinking all the time, I guess. You said for half a soldo you'd make me dance the *furiatta,* and by the devil's tail, I think I'll make you dance it now for nothing." She came out from behind the bar, still clutching the heavy club. "Stand up!"

Lorenzo looked wildly about, anywhere but at the furious woman.

"What's this!"

They both turned and faced Tano. "Back, She-wolf, leave him alone, he's mine!" She slunk away, and quietly watched them with burning, vindictive eyes.

"Come!" Tano's tone was very calm. Lorenzo rose and followed him. "Come," he repeated, "we will smoke."

"Opium!" The Hunchback whispered the word eagerly; if he could but satisfy the terrible craving for the drug he thought he would be content to die; at least he might win forgetfulness and dull his throbbing senses. He followed Tano to the dirty hall and passed on up the crazy stairs before him. They climbed two flights in silence; at the second landing Lorenzo made to turn to the right and entered a room.

"Not there," Tano commanded, "we will smoke in my room to-night, at the top." They climbed another flight and then a ladder leading to a deserted attic under the eaves.

Tano pushed the Hunchback into the dark, dust-burdened room, stepped in after him, closed and locked the door. He struck a match and lighted a candle, which he took from his pocket; then he crossed the floor to a dormer window let into the roof and attempted to open it. Finding it difficult, he knocked the glass out with his fist, and hurled the key through the broken pane to the street below. He listened, thinking he might hear it ring on the stone pavement.

After a time he shrugged his shoulders and turned to the Hunchback. "Couldn't hear it; we must be higher than I thought."

"Where's the opium?" Lorenzo asked wistfully, glancing about the filthy garret.

"Opium? Did I say anything of opium?" He affected surprise.

"You said we'd smoke!"

"So I did, so I did," Tano bawled, shaking in merriment, the wild maniacal light dancing in his sunken eyes. "Ha! ha! my little joke, *mio caro;* you will see the point later. For the present we will wait; it should not be long—half an hour, twenty minutes, forty minutes—shall we bet?" He drew some notes from his pocket. "You cheated me, Hunchback, but I am not vindictive, I'll give you your choice under or over thirty minutes, as you will. What do you say? Bet you two hundred *lire*—all I've got left—that she-devil has the rest. Come, out with your coin!"

"I cheated you?" Lorenzo asked dazed.

"Come, come, I'll get angry if you vex me. I'm quiet now, but the *buon Dio* help you if I let myself go. How many hundred did you give me for the job?"

"Four hundred."

"You lie."

"No, no, I speak the truth. Four one hundred *lira* notes folded so. He folded a bill in pantomime,

crouching back against the wall to avoid Tano's upraised fist. "I swear it before God, I swear it."

Tano hesitated. Something in the Hunchback's manner bid him pause; the circumstances of that night's work recurred to him and like a flash he remembered that the She-wolf had helped him to a room where he had slept heavily for many hours. He recalled that she had suggested he had been cheated. It was very simple; how the old woman had taken a part of his fee and persuaded him that he had been underpaid.

He laughed a little sheepishly and walked to the door; he would settle with her now.

He stretched his hand to the bolt; then he stopped and turned on Lorenzo sharply.

"You are clever," he snarled, "it almost worked."

"What is it?" Lorenzo whined. "Open the door, I have explained."

"Yes, yes, you have explained about the money."

"Then let me out."

"You are clever," Tano repeated, "you almost hoodwinked me into letting you go." He leaned against the rough wall and folded his arms. "Now tell me why that woman and her child were left to certain death." He stood where the light streamed full upon his careworn face, and as Lorenzo watched him the lines of suffering seemed to grow deeper; the shadows of pain seemed to change from blue to purple; the shrewd calculating look of insanity returned to his eyes, and Lorenzo realized there was no hope.

"It was an accident."

"Criminal negligence."

"I did not know."

"Why did you not know?"

Lorenzo remained silent; slowly a terrible fear distorted his face, his strained ears could hear a crack-

ling and roaring sound. He sniffed the air suspiciously; it was pungent with burning wood.

He turned to Tano, his face horrible with terror. Tano stood watching the crack beneath the door; the Hunchback slowly turned and watched it, too. Little puffs of yellow and white smoke curled from beneath it, formed in tiny spirals and faded. A soft glow appeared above and below, and even at the keyhole. He realized Tano's ghastly joke and turned sick. He staggered to the broken window and hung out, inhaling the fresh night air in great gulps.

Tano touched him on the shoulder. "Better get out on the ledge," he said.

The terrible coldness of his tone chilled Lorenzo. He glanced back into the room. The door was cracked and broken in many places, revealing the roaring furnace without. Little tongues of red and blue flame licked the frame, and ran along the base boards with incredible speed. The door fell out, a flash of flame lighted the small room with an intensity more brilliant than the sunlight in the Piazza at midday; then for a moment it was pitch black, and the smoke rolled upon them in great clouds.

"A veritable tinder box! Never saw anything burn so fast," Tano said critically. "Get out!"

Lorenzo scrambled over the sill and stood on the ledge without. Tano followed and stood beside him. He looked him over calmly, observed his trembling hands, his bloodless face and tight-shut eyes.

"Look down," he commanded.

"I dare not."

"You must; she had to."

Lorenzo opened his fluttering lids, but did not look down. He raised his eyes instead to the vaulted heavens, and for the first time realized their wonderful depth and brilliance. The tiny stars looked down upon him and twinkled just as merrily as though they

watched a joyous carnival. He realized the impotence of human effort, the great power beyond, unfathomable, implacable, working for the triumph of good over evil. He tried to voice a prayer; the words would not come freely. At last he muttered, "*Dio* pity me—."

Tano heard and smiled, the flames licked the window frame behind them.

"What can I do?" Lorenzo moaned.

"You can jump, as she did. Jump and I will follow."

THE END.

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